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CHRISTIAN UNION.



CHRISTIAN UNION;
ITS NECESSITY,
THE GROUNDS ON WHICH IT MAY BE HOPED FOR,
AND THE
OBSTACLES TO ITS ATTAINMENT,
WITH A
GENERAL REVIEW OF THE PRESENT STATE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH,

CONSIDERED IN
SIX SERMONS,

PREACHED AT

St. German's Chapel, Blackheath,

DURING LENT, 1852,

BY

THE REV. JOHN PAUL, B. A.

MINISTER OF THAT CHAPEL.



LONDON:
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**L O N D O N :**

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**TOWER-HILL.**  
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TO THE

Congregation of St. German's Chapel, Blackheath,

THESE SERMONS

PREACHED IN ST. GERMAN'S CHAPEL,

WITH THE DESIGN OF

CALLING ATTENTION TO THE EVILS OF DISCORD,

AND THE MEANS OF

ATTAINING TO UNION AMONG CHRISTIANS,

ARE INSCRIBED,

WITH EVERY SENTIMENT OF AFFECTION

AND ESTEEM,

BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE MINISTER,

JOHN PAUL.

BURNT ASH, LEE,
Easter, 1852.

O GOD, *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace; Give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in, by our unhappy divisions. Take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly union, and concord: that as there is but one body, and one Spirit, and one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may henceforth be all of one heart, and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.*

THE NECESSITY OF
CHRISTIAN UNION.

S E R M O N I.

St. John, xvii. 20 21.

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

WE are once more permitted by our merciful and long-suffering God to enter upon the solemn season of Lent. We are again summoned to prepare our hearts, by deep repentance, earnest prayer, and the mortification of our earthly members, for the more close survey of those awe-inspiring and soul up-raising scenes, which the cross of Calvary, the grave of the rich, and the vanquished bonds of death, exhibit. Close and candid self-examination is now required of us. The habits of our souls are to be brought under review; a search into our own consciences is to be instituted; and “that not lightly and after the manner of dissemblers with God,” but so that we may prove our own selves; and “whereinsoever we shall perceive ourselves to have

offended either by will, word, or deed, there to bewail our sinfulness, and to confess ourselves to Almighty God, with full purpose of amendment of life." The exercises of Lent take cognizance of the whole duty of man, and whatever, therefore, is calculated to promote our spiritual welfare, affords a fit subject for our public meditations at this season.

It has been our custom in past years to restrict our reflections, during Lent, to some one particular phase of the Christian life, and, regarding the divisions which vex the Church of Christ as a fruit of sin, we propose, with the Divine permission, now to enquire, whether it be possible to remedy our distracted condition, and to promote union among Christians. The advantage to be derived from submitting an enquiry of such magnitude to an individual assembly, may, perhaps, be open to question, but the knowledge that the prayers of two or three are not disregarded by our merciful Father, inspires confidence. Trusting to the promise, that if we ask we shall receive, if we seek we shall find, any diffidence as to the expediency of our design resolves itself into a want of faith. With these preliminary remarks we announce a series of discourses on Christian union in the following order:—*The necessity for union among Christians; The general grounds on which it might be attained; Principles, not degree, its basis; The Rule of Faith; The present condition of the various branches of the Catholic Church; and lastly, The Enemies of Peace.*

Brethren, on the threshold of this most important investigation, let us for a moment pause, and entreat the Holy Spirit to "pour into our hearts, that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace, and of all virtue, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before" our Lord and God; seeing that thus alone shall we be animated to "follow peace with all men."

Were the subject of Union among Christians proposed to a body of unbelievers, a calm and unprejudiced hearing could scarce be expected. Each one of the auditory would be predisposed to apply the epithets, visionary, utopian, impracticable. It would be said that the history of all ages teems with religious controversy; that the freedom of mind, necessary for energy, opposes an insurmountable barrier to its removal; that it would be as feasible to make all men of similar features, or of similar habits of body, as to render them unanimous in the reception of certain religious tenets; that such a result could only be achieved, by the universal enslavement of the intellect. With these, and other similar objections, the advocate of Union among Christians must expect to be met, if he addressed an assembly of unbelievers; nor is the fear to be slighted, that even a congregation of Christian men may be in some degree affected by the same doubts.

What ground of confidence then do we possess, sufficiently firm, to warrant our facing these difficulties?

what is the foundation, whereon our hopes may be built? We have one immoveable foundation, one certain ground of confidence, and one, moreover, which every Christian man must acknowledge to be firm as a rock: it is this; Our adorable Lord and Saviour prayed for the unity of his people. "I pray * * * that they all may be one; as thou Father art in me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." Here is our bulwark of strength, our tower of hope. *What my Saviour prayed for, I dare pray for; what I dare pray for, I dare hope for.* As an opponent to this consolatory truth what becomes of the vaunted experience of all ages? Where shall the terms visionary, utopian, impracticable, find employment? Where is the impossibility of harmonizing the discordant tones of the human mind? "With God all things are possible." Is not the soul of man in His power? Is not its every inlet open to His influence? Are not its thoughts to be directed by His will? What then shall resist that will? What obstacles shall be insuperable to it? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Do you still adhere to your doubts? Christian man, will you distrust the sovereign power of God? Did we stay ourselves on an arm of flesh, then indeed might we despair of seeing that accomplished, which, to the wisest, appears a most difficult task; but "we walk by faith, not by sight;" we endure "as seeing Him who is invisible;" and can we raise our eyes to the throne of glory, where Jesus sitteth

at the right hand of God, where he ever liveth to make intercession for our sins; can we call to mind His prayer spoken on earth "that they all may be one," and continue to question the reality of our hopes? God forbid! God of his infinite mercy deliver us from such scepticism. "God is not a man that He should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent; hath He said and shall he not do it; or hath He spoken and shall he not make it good?" Away then with the opposition of doubts, away with the tremblings of fear, away with the cavils of human wisdom. Our Saviour prayed for Christian unity; we dare pray for Christian unity; we dare hope for Christian unity.

Our subject being vindicated from the charges of inexpediency or visionary enthusiasm, we proceed to speak of the necessity for Christian Union. This will perhaps be most clearly perceived if we point out the evils that accrue from its loss. How painful is the conviction that we must speak of the loss of union among those who, as members of the same body, should be most closely bound together! How grievous is the knowledge, that the seamless garment of Christ is rent into multitudes of pieces by our divisions! The name of Christian is well nigh lost amid the variety of designations assumed by Christians, or allotted to them. Alas! are there not too evident signs of a thoughtless mockery of the Most High, when, on this day, thousands of English churchmen have called upon God in prayer, "that all

who profess and call themselves Christians, may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life," while the most marked character of the church of Christ, at least, that most marked by men of the world, is, that Christians "bite and devour one another!"

Where is truthfulness? Where is prayer? Where is holiness? Are they not to a fearful extent submerged in the sea of controversy? You meet a Christian man—you are desirous to converse with him on religious topics—you hesitate—and why? Because you know not what sentiments he may entertain, and you fear to risk a personality by your remarks. Is this the case among strangers? How much more is it among acquaintances, between whom religious differences are known to exist! Are there not, (for the question may be brought home to each of us personally,) are there not many men known to you, whose intimacy you shun, because of the diversity in your religious views? It does not follow that you are to blame because it is so—truth is too great a treasure to be risked for the sake of any worldly convenience. But does not the fact afford proof that Christian Union is fearfully in abeyance amongst us? Go through the various phases of British society, and you shall trace the universally evident footsteps of the demon of discord, contaminating our intercourse, infecting our social relationships, polluting the very altar of our God. Poisonous weeds are everywhere scattered among our wheat. The harsh clang of

opposition drowns the soft and soul-subduing notes of truth and peace: the tares grow up and choke the good seed, and it brings no fruit to perfection. Do we need illustrations of this mournful fact, let us briefly inspect the present condition of our countrymen.

We believe that we hold the truth of God in our hands; that our Church is a pure and apostolic branch of the Catholic Church of Christ; that our orders, our sacraments, and our services, are in strict accordance with the precepts of our Lord and His apostles; that we are blessed, in a peculiar manner, with the unveiled light of the glorious Gospel—speaking peace to them that are afar off, and to them that are nigh. We believe that the doctrines and the practice of Christianity are adapted, more than aught else, to improve the moral condition of man, and to elevate him in the scale of creation. Now, in regard to the efficacy of this belief, what one feature is there in the state of our peasantry, which justifies our thinking them to be under the sway of this pure light of the holy Gospel of Christ.

The political question of the well-being of our poor, whether they have abundance of food, or of other necessities of life, need not be entered upon. We ask not whether they participate in the advantages which the skill of man, and his ingenious machinery place within our reach. We ask you to regard their moral condition only; their tone of mind; and the amount of social happiness they enjoy: and we propose this question:—Is it possible for us, with a clear conscience, to refer to the habits and dispositions

of our peasantry, as evidence of the purity of our faith? Let those who possess the opportunity of noting the laboring classes, say whether they present an appearance of that moral well-being, which vital Christianity is so calculated to produce. Nay! more than this; let those who have observed the poorer classes of other countries, state whether the comparison they offer, does not demand a judgment unfavorable to our own. Look where we will, we perceive either moody silence or the riot of debauchery. Sons and daughters of toil are they indeed. From the dawn of the Monday to the sun-set of Saturday their work is before them. Treated as machines, they come to feel little else than machines. In the majority of cases, it is to be feared, they are found to be without a resource in themselves, without a joy for the present, without a hope for the future. Is it then to be wondered at, that observers of such a state of things, should point to the workings of the Church of Rome?—should adduce the peasantry of Belgium or France, who are under her rule, as proof of her superiority? Is it a matter of surprise that the unwary should be led to entertain sympathy with her?

We have instanced our laboring classes only. What if we should speak of our artizans, or our small shop-keepers?—of the healthy lad who seeks employment in our crowded city—strong in body, and robust in constitution, gradually losing his freshness—the spring of life within him becoming weak, until the paleness of cheek, the external evidence of internal disease, too plainly tells of the decay of strength,

and of energy? Of the helpless girl—the seamstress—the employed in laborious tasks—the tempted—the ruined? Is there not before us a sufficiency, a more than sufficiency, to prove, in the most glaring manner, the uncared-for condition of our population? Why, then, is our holy faith thus barren of fruits? *Our internal discord, the weakness, nay, the next to powerlessness, it superinduces, is alone the cause!*

Blame not the ministers of religion. Rebuke not the elders. Hear the truth. The religion of Christ is antagonistic to selfishness. The two are essentially opposed the one to the other. Selfishness sets up the golden image as an object of worship; Christianity says: “Use the world as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away.” In a united state of Christianity, selfishness must be vanquished. It is of too hideous a mien to obtain a public acknowledgment, but by dwelling upon, and magnifying, the discords of Christians, by professing not to know which among the many guides is to be followed, it, as it were, bargains for the attainment of its ends, by giving occasional support to one or other of the disputants.

We would be most careful not to trench on political grounds, but let the treatment that religion receives from the hands of our rulers, illustrate the statement now made. Has it not for years been plainly discoverable, that whatever good has been done, has proceeded from the efforts of individuals, rather than from the nation at large. Shall we speak of education? How eloquently do our wants

in this respect argue the cause in hand. Shall we adduce the operations of the society for the improvement of the labouring classes? the attempt to promote their sanitary advantage by means of baths and wash-houses? to further which, religion has never acted officially, and has only lent her aid, by the indirect means of her influence on the souls of individuals. One short reference to the past history of our country may here be permitted.

In the earlier days of our Church, besides the Sunday being regarded as a day of rest, the festivals were also observed. The recurrence of these afforded that relaxation, and that opportunity for personal enjoyment, sanctified by religion, which the labouring population required.

Should this be decried as a remnant of Romanism, we turn to the history of the Commonwealth, when at least no such charge can be made. There we see that the observance of the festivals of the Church was denounced and suspended, but was the relaxation of the poor also lost? Not so. The legislature, aware of the importance of the measure, instituted certain days as holidays, solely on the ground of providing the necessary rest for the sons of toil. But were a similar enactment to be proposed at this time, how would it be received? Would it not call forth ridicule and contempt? And wherefore? Are our countrymen now more hardy than they were? Are they unsusceptible of the happinesses of life, and may therefore be denied their enjoyment? Or is it not

that the idol of gold has through our lengthened divisions, and the decay of spirituality in past times, gradually obtained its present paramount position? And now like the hardest of masters, and the most cruel of tyrants, it demands the utmost farthing of labour, and battens on its thousands of victims.

The power of Christianity which should be felt in restraining selfishness, both in the individual soul, and in the national councils, is lost through our divisions, and the most exacting of terms are consequently imposed on our poor.

Brethren, there has long been carried on in the world a religious controversy. It may be simply stated in these words—Is the efficient cause of man's justification in the sight of God, faith in the merits of our Saviour Christ, considered irrespective of its fruits; or does it reside in the works which spring from such faith? Of these two opinions the United Church of England and Ireland, and the Church of Rome, may be regarded as the respective types. Are we to wonder that an appeal to the beneficial working of the two systems, tested by experience, should incline many to embrace the latter as true? But is such a just conclusion? Not so—Our system is that of God's word, but *its efficacy is next to paralyzed by our divisions*, and thus owing to a want of union among Christians, the very strongest of our holds becomes weak, and is placed in peril. This is the moral view of our subject, and we

may hope, that the evils we see to arise from the loss of peace among us, prove with sufficient clearness the necessity for Christian Union.

We now proceed to examine, briefly, the religious aspect engendered by our dissensions, and here let us attentively consider the concluding words of our text, "I pray * * * that they may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Our Divine Saviour thus foretold what would come to pass. Let Christians be united, and the world would believe the glorious gospel; let them be at variance, and the faith, and the truth He brought in, would not produce its results. We all know how the faith of Jesus extended itself in the first ages of the Church: and we also know, that it was the remark of a heathen "See how these Christians love one another." What is the state of the world, or to come more closely home, of our own country at this time? Unwilling to speak of personal observation, we quote a paragraph from a recently published literary paper.* The writer remarks, "Having for some time noticed an increasing spirit of infidelity among all classes of society, we were led to make enquiry into the cause, which resulted in a firm conviction that it arose from the flood of infidel publications which have been permitted to circulate, without let or hindrance, through all parts of the kingdom. If a Romanist issues a tract, or a work, it is

* Literary Times. February 1852. Articles on Strauss.

immediately attacked, and his assertions confuted; but if an infidel, whether atheist or deist, does the same, he is allowed to pass unscathed, as if he were a perfectly harmless being, and his work free from danger. We never find a clergyman replying to an infidel publication, but we have hundreds, aye even thousands, rushing into print to combat Popery." After making a just remark that Romanism, with all its grievous errors, is far behind infidelity in the amount of its guilt, and that the appeals made by scepticism to the pride of man allure him by the pretext of escaping mental bondage, the writer thus continues: "We can therefore imagine how likely such a system is to succeed with the men, particularly the young men, of the present time, and of how much importance it is to attempt the counteraction of this fatal pestilence, that we believe is making havoc among ten thousands of our fellow-countrymen." Very shortly after, the writer, speaking of the cheap publications, of an infidel character, now offered to the public, makes this startling statement: "Abridgments," (of one particular work he mentions,) "in shilling and half-crown volumes, as well as atheistical publications, are circulated by thousands over the country, and, as an instance in point, one at a shilling, which, for atheism and blasphemy, exceeds anything we have met with for some time, was issued on the first day of the new year, and, *within ten days from that time*, the first edition was exhausted and a second in the press." The writer adds, "This we know to be a positive fact." Brethren,

what a fearful amount of evidence is here brought before us! It would be unbecoming to specify publications by name, but no one can be at all acquainted with some of the recent additions to the periodical press, without knowing the fact before stated. Do we not here acknowledge the fulfilment of the prophetic language of our text—that unity among Christians should be a means, that the world might believe in the Lord Jesus, and that discord would interrupt the heavenly progress of the truth? It would almost seem as if the writer now quoted, was desirous to furnish proofs of this. On the subject of religious controversy, hundreds, aye, even thousands, are ready to rush into print; but for the defence of the very foundations of our faith, none arise.

Is it needful to tell the fruits of such carelessness? Shall we speak of the pestilential mists of infidelity, which, under the name of "Rationalism," are over-spreading our land? Shall we recall how its noxious vapours are even now beclouding the minds of men?—of our brethren?—silently invading the domestic hearth, and polluting the very temple of our God? Brethren, such would be no fancy sketch. It would represent a stern, a fearful reality. Who shall tell, besides the evil thus allowed, how sadly the power of religion, on the souls of individuals, is sapped by the prevalence of a controversial spirit? How extensively partizanship is made to supply the place of that "death unto sin, and new birth unto righteousness," which should constitute our great aim. How oneness with Christ is

bartered for adhesion to a code of opinions! Well may the language of St. Paul be quoted, "Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?" We must, for the present, pursue our subject no further. This much, it is hoped, has been proved: that through the disunion and discords of Christian men, the power of religion, for the amelioration of the condition of our countrymen, is thwarted; a door large and wide is opened for the influx of infidelity; a great decay of personal religion results; and, therefore, there exists the most imperative necessity for the attempt to promote union among Christians.

The practical lessons that our subject suggests are self-evident. Is disunion among Christians a fearful evil? Then must we do whatever we can for its removal. We must ourselves studiously avoid controversy, and discountenance it with the whole weight of our influence. We must cultivate more and more a spirit of love, that those, who see our light shine, may desire to be partakers of the same spirit, while they glorify our Father which is in heaven, for our sakes. We must studiously guard our households against every corruption which a licentious press is too ready to inoculate; but, above all, we must pray for the peace of God's Church. The prayer offered previous to our discourse may well form a part of our devotions, both in private and in our families. And if

your exertions be untiring, and your prayers earnest, doubt not of ultimate success. Christ our Lord prayed for the unity of His people. What He prayed for, you may dare to pray for: what you dare pray for, you dare hope for. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee."

THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN UNION.

SERMON II.

1 *Ep. St. Peter*, iii. 8.

“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another;
love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.”

COULD there be but attained an universal obedience to this apostolic injunction, no efforts to promote union among Christians would be required. The commands of Holy Scripture are acknowledged by all to be binding. When God speaks, man has but to obey. Would to God that the profession was realized in the practice! Is it not a matter worthy of surprise, that Christians allow that the rule given for their guidance enjoins “be ye all of one mind,” and yet, by their perversity, Christianity itself is made to become the parent of sin? How comes this? Is strife pleasurable? Is party zeal the test of honest candour? or is it that religion is made to consist in excitation of feeling; that man places himself on the throne of God, and requires his brother to bow down to his opinions, and humbly accept his dogmas? The

solution of this complicated enigma may be left to metaphysical discussion. The fact is certain. There is a calm and holy feeling which should pervade every member of the Catholic Church, which should make him regard each of his fellow-members as a brother, and induce a love to him as such, for "we know that we have passed from death unto life, *because* we love the brethren." This love dictates compassion for infirmities, pity for him who is "overtaken in a fault," and courtesy to all. Wherever then these glowing fruits of "the faith which worketh by love" are wanting, there may we without a breach of charity question the existence of the vital principle of Christianity.

Were we then, in propounding the grounds of union among Christians, to confine our remarks to generalities, the exhortation of our text would provide the materials for all that need be said. More, however, is required. We must examine the principles of our faith, so as to obtain a practical view of our subject. We must endeavour to ascertain what are the absolute essentials to membership with Christ. We must seek for such a definition of the Catholic faith as will strip from the zealot the cloak of earnest contention for the faith, with which he is wont to hide his disregard of the law of love. Thus may we trust, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit which we would ever seek, to promote the union of righteousness and peace, and to put to rebuke those who make ready for battle.

We would not, however, enter upon this examination without a few preliminary observations. The Word of God declares, that there may be a pretence of peace, where there is no peace. He then who would counsel union to separate bodies of men, connected by no common bond, is clearly in danger of obscuring truth for the sake of a phantasm. To do this would be to invoke an empty sentimentality, in place of a solid reality. We shall, doubtless, discover that there are upholders of certain dogmas, with whom union could only be sought at the expense of fidelity to our Lord and Saviour. Such an attempt would deserve the name of treachery rather than charity. There are, however, others who are already united to us, in maintaining important truths, but with whom we are at variance on some less prominent points. The object that is before us, is to ascertain whether these smaller matters do not occupy an adventitious position; whether we are not losing great results while contending for trifles. In a word, whether the pillars of the faith are not sufficiently clear, as supporting a common temple, in which Christians may worship the Great Creator at peace among themselves. Now, it will be understood from this, that we do not dare (at least at present,) to hope for *absolute oneness*, among the various members of the Catholic Church. We shall endeavour to show hereafter, that the gospel of our Redeemer supposes that a certain amount of diversity will exist between Christians. Friendship in private life

is quite compatible with difference of opinion, and we know no authority for explaining the admonition of our text "be ye all of one mind," as if it precluded that variation in details, which our ordinary companionship admits. We may be of "one mind," one tone of thought, without thinking precisely the same things, and so union among Christians may easily be conceived of, without involving that perfect unanimity, in every particular, which is not to be found in sinful man. We possess a valuable illustration of what is meant by Unity without absolute oneness, in the communion enjoyed by our church with her daughters, the Episcopal Church of America, and that of Scotland. With these independent bodies we are happily in close communion, but are there no diversities between us and them in the mode of performing our various offices? Certainly there are. We cannot now occupy our time by stating what these are, but the least acquaintance with the services and discipline of those churches, will testify that there are certain varieties, (we care not how small they be, it is the principle alone for which we contend,) which are not esteemed bars to inter-communion.

This illustration is important in another particular. It shows that we may be faithful sons of our church without exacting from those with whom we would fain cultivate a spirit of concord, *implicit submission* to her in every particular. You, brethren, are desirous to be members of our church not in word only, but in deed. We would not

for a moment forget that we possess this privilege. It would neither become me as your minister to speak, nor you, as churchmen to hear from me, any explanations, subversive of the principles of our venerable and venerated mother. My commission extends only so far as the voice of the Church is heard. You can only neglect that voice at your own peril. We are all bound by our fidelity to conduct our inquiries in accordance with the teaching of our Church; for though liberty of conscience is our birth-right, it is manifest, that to maintain communion with our Church, while setting her principles at nought, is but an empty mockery. Whatever, then, may be the course to which the prosecution of our investigations may lead, this must be borne in mind, that we are zealous though humble adherents of our Church—we wish to be guided by her rules, and to bring our thoughts into complete harmony with her counsels.

Is it objected that to take such a position is to overthrow the hopes of union among Christians? We answer, no. We believe that our Church is much misunderstood, that she is charged with bigotry and spiritual apathy; and knowing such opinions to be contrary to the truth, we are desirous to show what are the principles of our church as regards Christian Union. We are willing to appeal to the world at large whether the terms of communion she proposes, are not of the most liberal nature possible to be consistent with truth. We hope thus to render her existence, and your privileges as her sons, more dear

to you, while we also provide you with arguments whereby you may seek to soften the rancour of any who may oppose themselves, feeling certain of this, that all who really understand, and participate in, the spirit of our Church, are fulfilling the command of our text; for that she is distinctly marked as having compassion, being pitiful, being courteous. We would now return to the principal question before us. What are the general grounds on which Union among Christians may be attained?

In his Epistle to the Colossians, St. Paul speaks of those who are separate from the body of Christ, as "not holding the Head." (Col. ii. 19.) In a former part of the same Epistle, we read that He, "who is the image of the invisible God," who is "before all things," and by whom "all things consist," is "the head of the body the Church." (Col. i. 18.) From these words the deduction is, simple union in spiritual matters *cannot* subsist between Christians and those who deny the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we bow not at the name of Jesus, as worshipping "God manifest in the flesh," we may entertain some notions of religion, but we are strangers to *Christianity*. If Christ Jesus be not God we are idolators, and have no other safe refuge than Judaism; but since Christ Jesus is God, very and truly God of, that is, begotten of very and truly God, we cannot allow the slightest approach to union with those who refuse to acknowledge Him as such. Is this illiberal and exclusive? We may be content to be so with the sanction of St. Paul.

In his first Epistle to the Corinthians, that Apostle thus commands "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha." (1 Cor. xvi. 22.) To the Galatians, the same Apostle is equally distinct, "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Gal. i. 9.) And to show that St. Paul was not urged to these denunciations by his own ardent temperament, we hear the Apostle of love, St. John, giving very similar directions to the elect lady and her children, "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine," i.e. the doctrine of Christ, "receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." (2 Epist. St. John, 10.) If, further, it be remembered that St. Peter in the text, enjoins "love as *brethren*," as those who are fellow partakers of the heavenly calling, little more need be said to prove that union with any persons who do not receive the Lord Jesus as Very God, of Very God, can only be attained at the expense of our obedience to the Divine Word, and of our fidelity to our Saviour. This then we take to be the first great condition of Peace, that the Lord Jesus Christ be acknowledged to be both Lord and Christ.

In his Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul furnishes another test of Christian fellowship, viz., the reception of the same Sacraments. "We being many, are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Cor. x. 17.) And again, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers

of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." (1 Cor. x. 21.) That the Sacrament of Baptism is included in the spirit of these words, we perceive from another part of the same epistle, where it is written "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For, by one Spirit, are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.) These extracts are so conclusive as to need no additional remarks; they show that communion in the two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself, must form a condition of Christian Union. Perhaps, however, the most complete description of the bonds by which Christians are united, found in the Holy Scriptures, is recorded in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Speaking of the three thousand who were baptized on the day of Pentecost, the writer states "they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts ii. 42.) Here are given four several conditions of Christian Union:—doctrine, discipline or fellowship, the Sacraments and prayers. If then it can be shown that in these four particulars Christian men are at one, it will follow that whatever discords keep them now apart, are not necessary features of the religion of Jesus. Provided that there be concord as to the same doctrine, that they would submit to the same discipline, partake of the same Sacraments,

and join in the same prayers, the various members of the Catholic Church would be united, and our object attained.

This observation will naturally suggest the remark, that our definitions require further elucidation. What is the doctrine of Christianity? At first sight, this appears a question of immense magnitude. A satisfactory reply to it might be deemed only to be given, when the minute details of dogmatic theology had been rehearsed. Instead of attempting a task so much beyond our strength, let us go to the words of our Church to ascertain what are her definitions of the doctrines of Christianity. Let us recur to our services, and endeavour to extract the precise language used, and the questions she puts to her members, in proof of their continuance in her communion.

Now, it is plain that to attain to a satisfactory conclusion on this point, we must confine our investigations to the language of the Church, as distinct from the laws of our country. In other words, we must seek to know what are the requirements made of the laity, and not the clergy of our Church. We consent that the spiritual instruction of the Church, is the epitome of God's word; therefore it can admit of no change; but the laws of our country are of human origin, and we are constitutionally entitled to seek for such alterations, and ameliorations in them, as wisdom and experience may justify. Now, we who are called to be ministers in the Church are bound by certain laws, and subject to certain penalties on disobedience to them. It is true, that any clergyman may secede from his office,

and avail himself of the liberty granted to those who adopt this course; but it is likewise true, that so long as he maintains communion with the Church, he is liable to be dealt with according to the terms of the laws provided to ensure uniformity. The lay members of the Church, however, are subject to no law but that of love. The services of the Church are open to all who receive the doctrines she propounds, and it must therefore be to those doctrines, and not to the law of the land, that we must look for a reply to the question, what dogmatic theology does the Church demand of her sons. Perhaps the most lucid statement of the tenets to be held by the sons of our Church, is afforded in the service for the Visitation of the Sick. In this case, the clergyman, as the officer of the Church, is supplied with a formulary by which he may test the soundness in the faith of any individual Christian; and it is evident, on the principle that a whole is made up of its several parts, that what is required from that individual member, our Church deems sufficient for membership with Christ. Now, if we examine this service, we shall perceive at once that the only test applied, as to dogmatic theology, is the reception of the Apostles' Creed.

The minister is directed to examine the afflicted person, whether he repent him truly of his sins, and whether he be in charity with all the world; he is to exhort him to forgive all injuries, to make restitution for those he has committed, and to be bountiful to the poor; but these are

all parts of practical religion. Though fruits of faith, and only to be looked for as resulting from a true and lively faith, they are independent of any peculiar doctrines. *The only dogmatic statement of doctrine, required by the Church of her sons, is the reception of the Apostles' Creed.*

A reference to the service for the Visitation of the Sick, suggests a digression not altogether foreign to our subject. If we read the rubrics of that service carefully, we shall arrive at the important conclusion, that the Church admits of communion, without demanding absolute oneness in her sons. Thus, *if* the person visited, feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter, he is to be *moved* to make a special confession of his sins; but he may either accede to the admonition or disregard it, without affecting his union with the Church. Again, *if* the afflicted person humbly and heartily desire it, the Priest may absolve him after a particular sort, there inscribed, but his receiving, or not receiving this absolution, is by no means essential to his continuing in the fellowship of the Church. There is a liberty afforded in both cases which it is valuable to notice thus far, as it is proof that *absolute oneness* among her members is not deemed by our Church necessary to her communion.

To return:—the service for the public baptism of infants, completely bears out our remarks, as to the dogmatic teaching of our Church. The Church is a body corporate; when a new member is to be introduced to her communion, she demands certain guaran-

tees that no improper candidate be admitted. The godfathers and godmothers are therefore required to satisfy the Church, that the infant brought to baptism is a fit recipient of that Holy Sacrament. For this purpose, they are called upon to reply to certain questions. As the Catechism states, "They did promise and vow three things in my name. First, that I should renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh. Secondly, That I should believe all the articles of the Christian faith. And thirdly, That I should keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of my life." Here again, it is seen, that apart from the duties of Christianity, our Church regards one only test of dogmatic theology, and that is *the reception of the Apostles' Creed*. Now, it is not our design to maintain that the simple profession of this faith is sufficient to ensure salvation, (that is altogether a distinct question). There are numerous encouragements to faith and holiness proffered, important doctrines (not embodied in the Creed,) which the real churchman will hold; but these are matters for growth in grace, for the more firm establishment in the faith; they are not insisted upon by the Church as indispensable requisites, so that their non-reception should constitute a bar to communion with her by any of the laity.

It is scarcely necessary, in this place, to refer to our daily service, as that will more appropriately be considered under the head of prayers as a bond of Christian

union, yet we may just remind you, that the unity of design exhibited in the offices already spoken of, is also visible in the order for Morning and Evening Prayer. There have we no other methodic declaration of faith, except that contained in the Apostles' Creed.

Perhaps, however, we may be met with the objection that we use three Creeds in our service. But this is no valid objection, since the two others, the Nicene, and that which bears the name of S. Athanasius, are in reality but extended versions of the Apostles' Creed. They introduce no new article of faith, state no other doctrines, and are, indeed, but commentaries on that precious form of words which has apostolic origin. Our time forbids a minute comparison of the three, but we may remark, that even the clauses of the Athanasian Creed, which are commonly made the aim of objectors, are, if not expressed, at least implied in the Apostles' Creed. If, to believe certain articles, constitutes union with the Church of Christ, and so far, our hopes of salvation; it is certainly a plain inference, that to disbelieve them is to be out of communion with the body of Christ, and out of the pale of salvation. He, therefore, who objects to what are termed the dam-natory clauses of the more enlarged Creed, must, to be consistent with himself, also object to the use of any confession of faith; must esteem his individual judgment superior to that of St. Paul, who unites confession with the mouth to belief in the heart, as necessary to salvation.

We may, therefore, fairly make an appeal to the

candour of every Christian man, whether in respect of doctrine our Church does not propose a ground of union suitable to the whole Catholic Church. Will any pretend that a more extended faith than is embodied in the words of the Apostles' Creed is necessary for salvation? Will any, on the other hand, decry the demands as too stringent? Surely we may with justice contend that in this important respect our Church does fulfil the apostolic injunction of our text—she manifests great compassion, she is pitiful, she is courteous. It is truly a great privilege we possess, to have as the main requirements for our communion, the very terms which the earliest Christian Church, our fore-fathers in the faith, embraced. We do not pretend that the Apostles' Creed was literally composed by the sainted college, though there is some authority for that statement, but we do know that it was in common use in the very first ages of the Church, that it has been handed down from generation to generation, having through centuries formed the symbol, or watch word, whereby the Christian soldier might be known to his brethren.

It is no weak ground we occupy, when we are thus able to invite our brethren, from whom we are now unhappily separated, to accept the doctrinal requirements of communion made by our Church. We do not do so, only because we would fain bring them to us, but because in coming to us, they would recur to the ancient Catholic standard. Could there be discovered a more simple and comprehensive confession of faith elsewhere, it would be

our duty to weigh well its claims. Whether, however, we look to Rome, to the foreign Protestant Churches, to the Presbyterians of Scotland, or to the Congregationalists of our own country, it must be confessed, (albeit many are most sound in respect of doctrine) that none demand terms of communion alike liberal and comprehensive as our own. This is the gratifying fact, that warrants the proposal, that so far as doctrine is concerned, the concise and plain confession of the Apostles' Creed should be adopted as the general ground of union among Christians. Here is that liberty which the unfettered mind of man may justly vindicate to itself. Here is also a firm guarantee that liberty shall not be carried to licentiousness; by the preservation of the main pillars of the faith, the distinctive statement of that foundation, other than which no man can lay, even the Godhead and manhood of Christ Jesus our Lord.

The consideration of the Apostles' doctrine, as a ground of union, suggests that we should next speak of prayers, although in doing so, we depart from the order given in the extract from the Acts of the Apostles already quoted, as furnishing the principles of Christian Communion. This we do, inasmuch as the use of prayers is so intimately associated with a confession of faith, as to render the two scarcely separable.

There is, however, one important feature in the matter of prayers which does not belong to a confession of faith, viz., that while the latter is intrinsically unchangeable, the

former may admit of alterations, provided that the doctrines they contain are not obscured. A very small acquaintance with the history of our Liturgy informs us that while a very large portion of the prayers we offer were used by the Ancient Church, many prayers altogether new, were composed by our Reformers. We are not, therefore, bound by the principles of our Church to refuse any modifications which might minister to Christian concord. At the same time we are fully sensible that no one body of Christians repudiates any idea embodied in our daily services. The Roman Catholic might require more, the Calvinist might also wish for a more distinctive statement of his views, but whatever were their unwillingness to accede to the use of our daily prayers, it would consist in the charge of negative rather than positive evil. The most close scrutiny of our Morning and Evening Prayer, discovers no departure from the doctrines contained in the Apostles' Creed, and therefore it may be hoped that the use of our prayers would present no serious obstacle to Christian Union.

We can scarcely be ignorant that our daily service is constantly used by a body of Christian men who are accustomed to hold communion with the Congregationalist ministers. We know, also, that on particular occasions, those who are wont to offer extempore prayers do not object to our Liturgical Service, and we gladly grasp the hope that if this were found to be the only obstacle to union between us and the mem-

bers of the Reformed Churches, who are our own countrymen, their sense of the evils resulting from continued separation would lead to its being waived. So far then as our daily service is concerned, we would entertain the most sanguine expectations of a favorable issue to our endeavours. We cannot, however, nor would we wish to deny, that the prayers and services of our *offices* do embody doctrines which are not distinctly stated in the Apostles' Creed. If, therefore, we insist on their being used as a condition of union, we plainly depart from the ground we have already taken, and append some further confession of faith as necessary.

An attempt has lately been made to establish the extraordinary position, that doctrines uttered in petitions to the Throne of Grace, are not dogmatically asserted, and that the expressions of our formularies are not to be deemed evidence of adherence to the tenets they contain. Methinks, such an explanation would be rejected by every man of prayer. Such a plea is more worthy of the Civil Advocate, than of the humble Christian. What! shall the sinner draw near to the Throne of Him "to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid," with the use of expressions of faith that are not realized? This is surely nothing else than a plea for hypocritical profession, and a solemn mockery of our God. We cannot consent to plead for union among Christians, on so false a ground. No sure or lasting concord could possibly

be hoped for, on a basis so manifestly offensive to the Most High. We find ourselves, therefore, in this dilemma, we must either suggest the relinquishment of truths most dear to us; this our fidelity to our Saviour forbids; or, we must expect others who reject these truths to yield to our opinions; this they would esteem their fidelity to our Saviour forbade. How then is this serious impediment to be overcome? A practical consideration of the difficulty will best enable us to answer this question. We have already said, that though our brethren from whom we now stand aloof, might each desire a more distinctive enunciation of his peculiar views, yet that to none would our daily service be unacceptable. The wisdom of the compilers of our Liturgy is evidenced in the fact, that after the experience of three centuries, candid minds of every class can use, without any serious objection, the words they collected. Based as are our daily prayers on the expressions of the most ancient liturgies, comprised as are the most of them not only in the spirit, but in the very words of Holy Scripture, it is difficult to conceive of any form more adapted for universal acceptance. It is then, solely, as respects the language of our offices that any difficulty subsists. It is these, and these only, which constitute the great stumbling-block in the way of union. True, they are dear to us; but does it follow that we would hold communion with none but those to whom they are likewise dear? Are we necessarily to break the bonds of charity, to cease to love as brethren, to have compassion

one of another, to be pitiful, to be courteous rather than admit of others administering the Holy Sacraments and other rites, without absolute conformity to our model? We thank God that this question is already decided. The variations of the Churches of Scotland and America, with which we are in communion, have been allowed to exist, without interfering with the maintenance of brotherly love; and we are thus justified in making the proposal that the use of their peculiar forms, in the administration of the Holy Sacraments, and other rites, should be conceded to other bodies of Christians, without such a diversity being deemed a bar to inter-communion.

Every person must appreciate the necessity for the exercise of the most extended charity, when we would repair breaches of ancient date. May we not, therefore, testify our Christian love, by consenting to unite with those who differ from us in matters of what would be private observance, and by yielding the liberty of extempore prayer in addition to our formularies if required; while they on their part, actuated by the same holy feeling, should consent to use our daily services. Concession on both sides is needed; let it be but granted, and the ground of Christian Union, as regards prayer, would easily be attained.

What has now been said of the prayers used in our offices, will receive some further elucidation from the consideration of the next ground of Christian Union;—the Sacraments. Few of you will need to be informed, that

though prayer is a general and a fitting accompaniment to the celebration of the Sacraments, it is by no means an absolute essential to their efficacy.

Obedience to the command of our Lord consists in the performance of the precise *act* enjoined by Him. It is, doubtless, most becoming in us sinful creatures, at all times, to approach the holy things of our God with humility, repentance, and prayer, as well as with an earnest faith and hope in the merits and mediation of our Saviour; yet, are the prayers, and the humiliation, no positive essentials to the Sacrament. Faith is the only requisite, nor need that faith find any verbal expression. Our Lord's simple directions were: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." And when instituting Holy Communion, our Lord "took bread, and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also, He took the cup, when he had supped, saying; This cup is the new testament in my blood, this do in remembrance of Me." Here are no injunctions to prayer; the example of our Saviour, at most, demands the giving of thanks, and we therefore conclude that the Sacraments themselves are altogether efficacious, independent of the use of prayer, providing always that faith be present in the recipient.

Now compare this statement with the principles of

our Church. If you refer to the opening portion of the office for the ministration of Private Baptism, you will find that the two things essential to this Sacrament are implied to be, the applying of water, in the name of the Blessed Trinity. The rubric adds, "If the minister shall find, by the answers of such as bring the child, that all things were done as they should be, then shall he not christen the child again." And what is the inference to be naturally drawn from this, but that, provided the essentials to the Sacrament be secured, there is no ground for a breach of union owing to the use of this or that form of prayer, which is made subsidiary to it. Hence, then, we draw a new argument why the concession already advocated should be granted.

The use of the Sacraments is of such universal practice in every part of the Catholic Church, that no further explanations are required to show that they form another bond of Christian Union. The Roman Church does indeed mutilate Holy Communion, by withholding the cup from the laity; this however must be regarded as a matter of discipline, inasmuch as her defenders invariably maintain that both parts of the Sacrament are contained in the one. The discussion on this point will therefore be included in the general examination of the question of discipline, upon which we hope hereafter to be permitted to speak.

We have now considered the three main parts of Christian Union, declared in Holy Scripture to have been

upheld by the Primitive Church. "They continued in the Apostles' doctrine * * * and breaking of bread and in prayers."

We have seen that in each of these three particulars, the principles of our Church are of such wide extended liberality, as to open a door for the repairing of our breaches, and cementing anew the bond of brotherly love. The subject of discipline is yet to be broached, and we must feel that it involves difficulties of no ordinary magnitude. Nevertheless, if the Christian world can be but brought to reflect on the duties, rather than the speculations, of their profession; if St. Peter's admonition be observed so that we learn to have compassion one of another, to be pitiful, to be courteous, we may entertain the expectation that the glowing spirit of charity shall dissolve even the icebergs of separation, and Union among Christians be yet attained.

And now, in conclusion, brethren, we may observe, that though little of our subject is explicitly reducible to the amelioration of our daily walk and conversation, yet the whole tone of our reflections is calculated to make a forcible appeal to our affections. We have examined the principles of our faith; the principles of our Church. We can scarcely have failed to be sensible of the calm and holy spirit, which is the evident sign of the power of Christianity. We have not explored depths of doctrine; but the faith that is in Jesus has been revealed as the very foundation of our hopes. We have not dwelt

minutely on the Christian life ; but we have been accompanied by a sense of that fervent and unaffected love which is the chief manifestation of the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit. One thought alone appears necessary in addition. The principles of our Church evidence great liberality as regards participation with her communion ; from this it follows, that she deems the attainment of the life of Jesus in the soul a duty to be diligently pursued in private. She would not exclude the weakest brother, but she would have all her children grow up into spiritual manhood. With this general observation we conclude. Hitherto we have been engaged in the investigation of matters of controversy. Now have we before us a different field of religious exercise. The table of the Lord invites our approach. There we need look on naught save the love of our only Lord and Saviour, and our own unworthiness. There may we behold the tokens of reconciliation with our God, and partake in the means of growth in sanctification, in oneness with Jesus.

Let us, then, draw near with faith, and take this Holy Sacrament to our comfort, nor fail, amid the prayers we present at the footstool of mercy, to remember the peace of God's Church.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love Thee.

*This Sermon was preached just previous to the
Administration of Holy Communion.*

PRINCIPLE NOT DEGREE.

SERMON III.

1 *Cor.* vii. 15.

"God hath called us to peace."

It is one characteristic of Holy Scripture, that the doctrine, the reproof, the correction, the instruction in righteousness, for which it is profitable, are not afforded in concise didactic rules, directing each individual action of life; but in general principles to be applied by every man for his personal guidance. The Sermon on the Mount may serve for one out of many illustrations. In that incomparable discourse, our Lord plainly teaches that not the letter only, but the spirit of the Divine commands is to be regarded; that the precepts demand a comprehensive obedience; and that many evil propensities are rebuked, and many humble endeavours after holiness encouraged, although they are not particularized as worthy of condemnation or commendation. In other words, we are furnished with the principles rather than with the full details of duty.

Now, none will deny that in every portion of the human family there have always been found a wide diversity of mind, a disparity of judgment, and a variableness of temperament. There are the strong and the weak among Christians, as among other men; there are the impassioned and the phlegmatic, the sanguine and the despondent, the energetic and the calm. The holy brotherhood of the disciples contained a St. Peter and a St. John. The primitive Church received into her bosom a Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened, and a Philippian jailer whose entrance into the fold of Christ was by the door of agonizing terror; plainly betokening, that a reception of the truth is compatible with a retention of individual characteristics.

Since, then, Holy Scripture affords main principles rather than particularized precepts, and these principles are to be personally applied by men differing in mental constitution, it follows that it is not at variance with the spirit of Christianity, for Christian men to differ among themselves as to the *degree* to which their *principles* are to be enforced. If, indeed, the power of the Holy Spirit on the soul of man, caused the change of its faculties, as well as of its desires, then might we look for a positive conformity not only in principle, but in degree, among Christian men; this, however, is not the case. "There are diversities of gifts," "there are differences of administrations," "there are diversities of operations." "The manifestation of the Spirit is" truly "given to every man

to profit withal;" but the quickening from the death in trespasses and sins, consists in the implanting of new affections, not the imparting of new characteristics. Eternity takes the place of time; oneness with Christ, that of oneness with the world; peace with God is preferred to the applause of man; "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away," supersedes the perishing aggrandizements of mortality. This renewal unto holiness, however, only effects a change in the mental conformation, by the reaction of holiness, in subduing harshness, and quickening zeal; in other respects, the faculties of the soul remain the same. It is then, this variety of the faculties, this variableness of temperament, which necessarily involves a certain want of oneness, even among the most exemplary Christians; at the same time such differences reach *degree* only, not *principles*. "God hath called us unto peace;" but not such a peace as inflicts mental bondage.

We would now apply these remarks to the subject of Union among Christians.

In our last discourse, we saw that so far as doctrine is concerned, the reception of the Apostles' Creed is deemed by our Church a sufficient bond of union, and that in this, as in other respects, she walks most closely in the steps of the Primitive Church. The practical utility, however, of proposing such a condition of peace among Christians is rendered valueless to a great extent, by the spirit that is abroad, which will persist in demanding

some more definite ground of concord. So long as one body of Christians maintains that others have vitiated the Articles of the Creed, by expositions opposed to its principles, we can scarce look for unity on that ground; we do, indeed, but substitute another field of combat for that now occupied.

For example, the member of a Reformed Church may accuse the Roman Church of denying Christ, by the worship of the Virgin, the claim to infallibility, or other of her peculiar tenets. On the other hand, the Roman Church may assert that the Reformed body annihilates belief in the Holy Catholic Church, by the dissensions rampant within her pale. Yet is the Apostles' Creed common to the two. It is evident, therefore, that to endeavor to assuage this spirit of domination, our investigations must lead us to a knowledge of the *principles* maintained by each branch of the Catholic Church, in order to ascertain whether peace may be ensued. If it be found on inquiry that principles are at variance, then our hope of concord must rest in an entreaty that the Saviour of Man will take from the erring, "all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of His Holy Word, and so to fetch them home to His flock that they may be saved among the true Israelites, and be made one fold under one shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord." If, however, we find that the differences which now keep asunder various parts of the Church of Christ are not of principle but of *degree*, then may we rightly hold forth the welcome of fellowship to

such as differ from us ; then may we cement anew the bonds of union, which acrimonious feeling, and secular influences, have for so long a time severed.

God hath called us unto peace. May His Holy Spirit incline all our hearts to seek peace and ensue it.

The first question that now presents itself to us is this: Can the Reformed Churches be in communion with the Roman Church ?

We may appear about to open the whole Romish controversy, and to engage in a very lengthy discussion ; but this will be avoided in a very simple manner. The Roman Church requires, as the terms of her communion, the recognition of what is termed the Creed of Pope Pius. In this confession of faith are found many most weighty additions to the articles of the Apostles' Creed, therefore, were we ever so willing to proffer union with her, our advances would be rejected, unless we consented to accept her modern enlargement of the symbol of faith. Union with Rome implies submission to Rome. This was the position of the controversy three centuries ago, and thus it stands at the present. We desire to tread in the steps of our forefathers in the faith, and therefore, dearly as we love peace, we must prefer truth, and abstain from encouraging the thought of union with Rome as she is. The guilt of separation is seen to rest on her, because of her great pretensions, and this simple view of our relative existences, most clearly shows that the Roman Church in this our land is a schismatical body. She will not be at

peace with us except on the condition of our submission to her, and yet she sets at nought the most ancient principles of the Catholic Church, and intrudes herself into our fold.*

Did Rome not oppose the obstacle to peace, presented in the before named Confession of Faith, we should be willing to examine the principles she maintains; but in the face of so serious an impediment, such an employment appears a useless expenditure of time. With these brief remarks we dismiss the question of union with the Roman Church.

It is a mournful fact, but one nevertheless which we cannot hide from ourselves, that whatever doctrinal controversies harrass any of the Reformed Churches, who retain the main articles of the Catholic faith, they are maintained and keenly debated among our brethren of the Anglican Church. In pursuing our investigation, then, whether opposing principles are involved in the doctrinal dissensions of the reformed bodies, we may hope to be enabled in all humility, to speak words of peace to our own brethren.

Now the great subject of doctrinal dispute which has rent the Catholic Church, and on which more or less closely all contentions hinge, is this:—what is the efficient cause of man's justification in the sight of God? Our

* The subject of the possibility of Union with the Roman Church is fully discussed in Bishop Hall's Treatise, entitled "No Peace with Rome," to which those who require further information may refer, as affording a brief synopsis of the enquiry.

Church declares in her eleventh article —“we are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by Faith, and not for our own works or deservings.” This, which is usually known among us as the doctrine of Justification by Faith, may be regarded as the chief bulwark of the principles upheld by the Reformed Churches. It is acknowledged as truth by our own and every Protestant Church, both in this kingdom and abroad, and was boldly stated by the great Saxon Reformer to be the sign of a standing or a falling Church. The opponents of this doctrine maintain that “we are justified through our own inherent righteousness, infused into us by God, through the merit of Christ.”

Now, that the subject may be made as plain as its nature permits, it is necessary to observe that both parties maintain that our justification is procured only by the merit of our Lord and Saviour, and further, that faith is the instrument of man's acceptance with God; moreover, that unless faith be developed in the effects of love, it is dead being alone. Hence, then, the controversy is not as to the reality of the merits of our Saviour, the utility of Faith, or its operative nature; but whether man is justified in the sight of God, by reason of the Faith, which grasps the merits of Christ, or by reason of the works, the fruits of the faith which grasps the merits of Christ. The righteousness of Faith is termed imputed righteousness. The righteousness of works which are the fruits of faith, is called, imparted righteousness.

Now, neither of the disputants contend that imparted righteousness is acquired by the mere efforts of unassisted nature, both agree that it is not natural to man, but is infused into him through faith in Christ, so that the controversy is not,—are we saved by Christ,—do we save ourselves; but are we justified by faith grasping directly the merits of Christ, that is by imputed righteousness; or are we justified, by faith working in the soul and causing it to bring forth fruits of love which are accepted of God, that is, by imparted righteousness.

The question does not terminate here. We have hitherto spoken of being justified, being accepted of God as an understood term; but it is now necessary to state, that on the definition of this word depends the main point of the controversy. The advocates of imputed righteousness maintain that to be justified signifies *forensic acceptance*; that is, that on account of the merits of our Saviour, we are justified, or *pronounced not guilty* in the sight of God. The advocates of imparted righteousness deny that the term is used forensically, and assert its absolute character; not merely that we are pronounced just, but are *made just* in the sight of God. Hence, then, it appears that the diversity of opinion regards two different states of man, as an object for the merciful acceptance of God. Is the justification by faith of which the Holy Scriptures speak, indicative that man is accounted righteous, or that he is made righteous?

Now it may be easily conceived that to men of prac-

tical minds, this discussion may savour much of a verbal controversy. Both parties agree as to the sole cause of man's justification, the merits of our Lord and Saviour; both require the same results to be produced on the life, the fruits of love; and both must therefore allow, that the real question at issue is deeply metaphysical. It resolves itself, in fact, into a determination of the counsels of the Most High. Does God condescend to accept man because he believes, or because of the effects of his faith? Methinks it is not too much to say that it is not necessary to salvation that this most difficult question should be solved. Provided always that we humbly acknowledge that we can only be saved by the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and that of ourselves we can do nothing to merit the joys of heaven, we can see but little reason for a breach of union, because of a difference as to the divine counsels.

We must allow that a difference of principle is involved; but we contend that in itself the principle is of so very subtle a nature as to elude the grasp of the majority of minds.

One objection may be raised to such a conclusion. It may be said, with much justice, if the doctrine of justification by faith be of this impalpable nature, why has it been so strenuously insisted upon by every one of the Reformed Churches? Is it not to cast a slur on our own Church, to assert that she has dogmatically declared that which is of no practical moment?

Our reply is, the doctrine, though *in itself* of this deeply metaphysical nature, involves results of the greatest importance. As a matter for direct influence these are not fully seen. The advocate of imputed righteousness may conceive, that the contrary doctrine leads to a trust in personal good works, and encourages the spirit of the Pharisee. He who maintains imparted righteousness may assert that the doctrine he rejects induces a false peace, and beguiles the soul into a fancied security. These charges, however, are mutually denied, therefore charity commands us not to entertain them, so that when hedged in by other recognized tenets of our Church, we are at a loss to perceive any great practical evil arising from saying that the fruits of faith are the instruments of our justification.

It is, however, very different when this principle is carried out to its greatest extent. Then do we perceive that it militates most strongly against the truth, as it is in Jesus.

Works of supererogation, that is, that man can do more than is required of him ; pardon for sin by penances, indulgences, the saying of masses, and other kindred dogmas proceed from this one and the same principle.

Although, then, considering the doctrine in itself, we hold it to be of no great *practical* moment; looking at the consequences to be derived from it, we would rejoice that our Church has so distinctively pronounced her judgment respecting it. The fact that our Church has done so

ought to possess influence over her sons, and it does not seem to be too much to demand of such, that where so great perplexity exists, they should yield that obedience which the mother's voice demands. If a tenet be dangerous and uncertain, there is surely sufficient reason why it should be relinquished. Still, we again maintain, that among our brethren, where no practical diversity is felt, there can be no room for want of concord. If, by the permission of our Heavenly Father, men of sincere piety holding these different views, could but be brought together calmly and dispassionately to consider their separation, the best of results might be awaited.

The next point of controversy which demands our attention, is of a very difficult nature, because it also involves matters of great obscurity. It may be briefly stated in these words: Does the Holy Spirit ever dwell in the soul of man without evidencing His operations by perceptible fruits? In other words: Can man, by yielding to sinful propensities, so obscure the divine influences within him, as to prevent their efficacy, while he does not utterly quench them?

Two very fertile subjects of controversy hinge upon the reply to this question. If the Holy Spirit does dwell in the soul of man, only when the fruits of a holy life are manifested, then is the doctrine of baptismal regeneration erroneous. If, on the other hand, the contrary be the case, that man may by yielding to sinful inclinations, obscure the Divine light, but not altogether extinguish

it; then the doctrine, that we are regenerate in and by Baptism, is not necessarily mistaken.

Again, if the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration is true, then that of Individual Election or Predestination is not. If on the other hand the infant is not born again in Baptism, then the tenet of Predestination may be true.

Now in regard to these much agitated questions, we may comfort ourselves with one very important truth, viz. neither of them is to be held as essential to our salvation. Provided that the merits of our Saviour be made our only hope,—that He be our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, it may surely be left to each man's individual judgment, whether the Holy Spirit was bestowed upon him in his Baptism, or at some subsequent period; whether he hold the doctrine of National or Individual Election.

Those of us who are called to be the ambassadors of God, who in Christ's stead pray you be ye reconciled to God, may feel that we possess a firm hold on you, if we exhort you to maintain your privileges, and not to fall from your high calling. Others may conceive, that to denounce the terrors of the law of God against the sinner "the Soul that sinneth, it shall die" is the more effective mode of awakening him to righteousness. Both however aim at the same end: the words of the one are, "if you neglect your privileges you are shut out of glory;" those of the other are, "if you rise not from the sleep of death, you will be an outcast from Heaven:"

One may think, that to dwell continually on the certainty of Heaven possessed by the elect, is to invite a sluggishness of soul; another may deem the full assurance of faith to be the great incentive to holiness. But practically, do not the systems coincide? do not both hold forth Jesus, the Saviour of sinners, as the only hope for fallen man—faith in Him, as the necessary requisite to salvation—and the fruits of good living, as the inseparable results of faith? True; the principles are different, different like two rivulets, which rising from a double fountain, shortly unite into one broad stream of gospel truth. Can there then be any real difference? Is there any room for prolonged contention? Moreover, do not the opponents agree in part? Would any Christian man pretend that the Holy Sacrament of Baptism is of no benefit whatever? The fact of its being instituted by our Lord, who finished all the ceremonial law, forbids such an opinion. If then it is of benefit, it must be of spiritual benefit, and provided some amount of spiritual privilege is conferred, then is the question one of degree, not of principle.

We may be brethren, united in the bonds of Communion, though one deem the grace of Christ conferred in the Holy Sacrament to be but partial, and another attribute to it more extensive efficacy.

The same may be said of the doctrine of Election. None dares to limit the arm of the Almighty, or to deny that He can if He will, choose one individual to be His servant, out of a mass of His creatures; while on the

other hand, none would presume to say that He does choose or has chosen, any whose walk and conversation do not develope the love of holiness. Here again is there no question of principle, but of the degree to which a principle is carried out; may we not confidently hope, that a spirit of charity and brotherly love, would find but little reason for a prolonged controversy, on these two subjects.

There are other questions which distract men's minds, but which do not require to be very minutely examined, inasmuch as they bear external evidence of being differences, not in principle but in degree.

The tenet of Apostolical Succession, how small is the breach, which in this respect has been so magnified. What body of Christians is there which has not its orders, which does not admit those who are to execute the ministerial office by a solemn rite, without which they cannot perform the functions of the office. The only difference that can be mooted on this subject is whether ordination by the hands of a priest only is valid, or whether Episcopal laying on of hands is needed.

On this point we need not now speak, as it will claim attention hereafter. Thus far at least, all consent that some admission to the sacred office is necessary, and therefore the Apostolical succession is a question of degree, not of principle.

So again as to the power to absolve from sin. Who of us is not rejoiced to administer spiritual consolation, to

pour into the afflicted soul weighed down by sorrow, those words of comfort which our adorable Saviour has so bountifully provided?

Where, then, I ask, is the practical difference between the minister of Christ saying to the son of despondency—"your condition of soul is such that I may safely hold out to you the highest hopes of the Gospel of Christ our Lord," or saying, "by the authority of Christ committed unto me I absolve thee from all thy sins." Our minds shrink from anything like Priestly absolution, lest so powerful an instrument should again be made to subserve the cause of spiritual tyranny. Is there not, however, much groundless alarm in this case? Words are valuable only so far as they produce an effect on the mind of the hearer; if, then, the same result of peaceful tranquillity follows the use of two modes of expression, are they not in truth identical?

The spirit of our countrymen at this time is most averse to what is called Priestly power; but is not the object of their animosity a shadow? Do not I, as your minister, or ought I not to possess power? Am not I bound to denounce sin plainly, to encourage holiness and faith; and that not merely by long arguments to convince, but by the positive assertions of God's word? Of what advantage would be the ministerial office if we were only to temporize, to suggest, to imply? Nay, we do more, we must do more, to be faithful. We must declare to you the whole counsel of God, whether ye will hear, or whether ye will forbear. We stand armed with the

authority of heaven, and we boldly say, that obedience to our word cannot be refused without peril to your souls.

We have not, nor would we have power to inflict corporeal punishments; but as you look to us for instruction, it cannot fail but that our words must fall upon your ears with a force superior to any admonitions of private friends. When we declare unto you the message with which we are entrusted, then is the sentence of our Saviour applicable—"He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth Him that sent me."

Such authority is inseparable from the ministerial office, and it would not be retiring modesty, it would be sinful disregard of our calling, did we not maintain it.

This last consideration is perhaps the most fertile cause of dissension at the present time. It wears a half-political garb, and is, therefore, more keenly debated; but concerning it, as concerning the other points examined, may we not say that the difference is greatly more in degree than in principle?

In concluding our present discourse, brethren, we can but remark, that besides the exhortation to an extensive exercise of charity which it inculcates, our present examinations afford other practical benefits.

Men are too prone to think, that among the Reformed Churches there is such extensive division, as to well nigh obliterate the truth. We have this day looked into the main points as regards doctrine, and may we not now put

it to any candid mind whether our differences are not much more nominal than real? Is there not among Christians of the Reformed Churches a much greater concord than any person, who merely notes their disputations, would imagine? It is so, and from this fact we may learn, and carry home this important lesson;—when among independent bodies there is so much unanimity, there exists the greatest probability of truth. Let us, then, endeavour to frame our lives according to this truth. Let the imputed righteousness of Christ be our desire, and no less let us endeavour to be partakers of His holiness, thus realizing our oneness with Him. Let us earnestly pray for that faith, by which we are justified in the sight of God, for that Divine assistance, whereby we may have “Christ in us, the hope of glory.” Prayer is the Christian’s resource, he thereby obtains the greatest of favors.

Brethren, pray for the peace of God’s Church. “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love Thee.”

THE RULE OF FAITH.

SERMON IV.

2 *Tim.* iii. 16, 17.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

IN our late discourse on Christian Union, we saw that in the important respects of doctrine, prayers, and the Sacraments, whatever differences separate the Reformed Churches, exist in degree only, and not in principles. We now approach a difficulty which admits the same solution, to a very limited extent—Discipline.

It is a lamentable feature of Modern Christianity, that the union among Christians, declared by our Lord to be a requisite for the success of His Gospel, is wounded most deeply by the contentions of His disciples, as to the mode in which that Gospel is to be promulgated. The passions of men make the casket more precious than the jewel. Christians unite in the prayer, "Thy Kingdom come;"

they exert their energies, give of their wealth, and sacrifice their time for the advancement of the Redeemer's Glory; and yet weaken these efforts, and submit to be shorn of their strength, for the sake of comparative trifles.

Now if Christians were truly and earnestly solicitous for the conversion of the world, could this state of anarchy continue? One of two conclusions must be certain; either the prayer of Jesus, and His repeated exhortations to union among His disciples, are realized in our present disorganized state—this we presume none will pretend to assert; or the real power of Christianity is sadly in abeyance. The nature of our dissensions suggests the thoughts, that the avowedly ungodly are not alone in the attempts to hide their sins, under the veil of companionship in transgression, and that the corruption consequent on evil communications reaches the Church of God itself.

Brethren, the violation of the law of love betokens a faulty Christianity. To content ourselves with a religion of partizanship, is not to verify the life of Jesus in the soul. But wherefore repeat these well known truths? what advantage is to be expected from such generalities? Each man deems himself to be right, and that the fault of separation lies at the door of others: a certain peace of conscience is thus secured, and the idea of personal guilt, as involved in the breach of unity, is utterly discarded.

How then are we to hope to heal our differences? Shall we ransack the pages of controversy, and balance argument against argument? This would be a labour to very

little purpose. Shall we suggest a compromise, in order to meet the peculiar views of differing bodies? This would be not only to exceed our powers, but also to forge a similitude of peace, to be broken to pieces in a moment. Shall we attempt to persuade individual christians in private, or to shame them into peace by public reproaches? Each of these efforts is seen to fail; we are not wanting in private admonitions, and the Roman Church is by no means backward, to vaunt of the "Variations of Protestants." Is there then no other ground, which the advocate of peace may occupy? Methinks a voice is heard,—“To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them;” to this voice let us give heed; to the truth of Holy Scripture let us bow, and in the declarations of the Divine records, let us seek for the means of securing union among Christians.

May the Holy Spirit, moved by Whom holy men of old spake, incline each of us to embrace, and ever hold fast, the truths He has revealed for our guidance.

When we profess to promote union among the Reformed Churches, and to appeal to the word of God as affording the means for so doing, we may seem to be in pursuit of a very phantasm. We may be asked, whether the Bible has not been recognized as the Rule of Faith for centuries; whether we claim some peculiar power, to harmonize the discordant deductions made from it; whether we expect the Christian world to submit to our decisions. To all such

enquiries, this simple reply is sufficient; we believe the Bible to be a direct revelation from God; we believe that whatever is there declared, is unerring truth, and that the abundant bounty of the Almighty has in this, as in all other of His works, gifted us with a supply commensurate with our wants. At the same time it must be freely acknowledged, that every party claims the authority of the Bible as supporting its views, and that this fountain of peace, the perfect standard of truth, is made, by sinful man, to supply fuel for contention, in place of the cooling streams of concord.

This then is our present subject of discourse; how is the Bible, the Rule of Faith, to be applied to the promotion of Christian Union? Now, it must not be forgotten, that our principal object is to point out the means of reconciling differences in the matter of discipline: this thought forbids us to treat of the Bible as an individual guide only; we must regard it as the source of instruction for bodies of men. If it be said that bodies are made up of individuals, and therefore, whatever is applicable to the one, belongs also to the other, we rejoin, that the Christian religion requires of us, not only private personal duties, but also a regard to the welfare of the Church at large.

So far as a man is personally concerned, the principle that each of us "to his own master standeth or falleth," must be admitted; but the contagious nature of error, the influence that every man necessarily exerts, and the pernicious results of evil counsels, prove that departures from

truth must be rebuked, not only for the sake of the transgressor himself, but also for the preservation of the Church from contamination. The minister of Christ, must regard every individual under his care, not only in his private, but also in his corporate capacity: he must endeavour to reach the consciences of all, while he dares not recommend any course of proceeding as a general rule, because it may suit the particular case of this or that person. Hence, then, we do not pretend at this time, to speak of the Rule of Faith, as subserving the growth in grace of some one individual peculiarly circumstanced, but as ministering to the edification of the Church at large.

This remark brings us to the main point of our discourse, for we are led to seek the means of so arriving at the truth set forth, in the Word of God, as to insure general advantage.

In order to place this question in a full light, it is desirable to state certain truths, even at the risk of repeating what has already been said. No Christian man, certainly no member of our own Church, will deny that the Bible is the Word of God, dictated by the Holy Spirit for our doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. While none pretend that its language constitutes a perfect model of rhetorical style, all admit that its intention is, for the most part, comprehensible by the great majority of men. It is therefore asked, and that too with much propriety, "cannot we learn from

God's Word all that He wills us to know? Is there any need for recurrence to any other authority?" These questions appear so completely conclusive, as to bar all further inquiry. The multiplied expressions of the 119th *Psalm*, as to the support, the guidance, the comfort the writer received from God's law, sufficiently evidence, that it is not a mere theory, but an absolute practical fact, that by the Holy Scriptures, "the man of God is thoroughly furnished unto all good works." We would boldly maintain in the face of all opponents, the unerring certainty of the words of our text.

Now, however, this difficulty opens upon us; the Word of God is certain truth; truth is always known by its unity with itself; whence then arises the great diversity of opinion among those who profess and call themselves Christians, and who declare their willingness to accept, unreservedly, the teachings of Revelation? We answer, the sin of dissension is not inherent in the Word of God, but in the perverse disputations of man. Were illumined understandings, and humble minds, brought by all men, to the study of the Sacred Volume, a perfect unanimity must result; but wherever, by reason of the corruptions of the heart, the Word of God is "handled deceitfully," there must we look for error, and consequent diversity of opinion. If then we grant the full weight of the reproach of the Roman Church, that the wide spread use of the Bible is the source of opposition, to what conclusion are we

brought? that the word of God is defective? God forbid! No, but that the human interpretations of that Word are erroneous, because they are the devices of sinful hearts fastened on the Holy Scriptures, and not the simple deductions of humility.

Now brethren, we love, we reverence the Word of God, we would entreat you also to cherish that glorious possession; but we do not love, we do not reverence the unchristian waywardness of man, and we dare to set it at naught, as next to worthless. The Word of God "handled deceitfully" may be made to sanction flagrant error. If it be but partially read, the most humble and sincere person may form false conclusions, by reason of want of diligence in "comparing spiritual things with spiritual." If it be studied with great zeal, but without an unprejudiced mind, then will the labour bestowed produce the deeper implanting of prejudice, and not the fair fruits of truth. On one condition only can we concede a certain freedom from error, and that is, provided the reader summons the required energy, and approaches the task in an humble self-distrusting tone of mind, giving personal diligence, yet relying on the Holy Spirit to keep his affections; in such a case it seems derogatory to the Word of God, to say that failure must accompany the endeavour to ascertain "what is truth." If, however, either of these qualifications be wanting, then is it no diminution to the perfection of God's Word to assert, that great error may ensue upon its perusal.

The reality of our investigation then, is not, whether the Word of God is the alone fountain of truth, but how can we know that the persons who claim to be expounders of that Word, are animated with the requisites, for eliciting truth from that fountain. We most fully allow that a soul completely under the influences of the Holy Spirit, will certainly be guided into all truth; but we contend that without such influence no mere study of the Sacred Volume will ensure its attainment. This is the precise declaration of Holy Scripture. St. Paul thus speaks "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things." (1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.) The words of our text declare the same "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, * * * * that the MAN OF GOD" (not the self-dependent man of the world), "may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." And though our Lord commanded the unbelieving Jews to "search the Scriptures," and the Bereans are praised for their "readiness of mind," and that "they searched the Scriptures;" yet in both cases it was not that doctrine might be elicited, but that a fact might be determined; whether or not, the actions of Jesus fulfilled the prophecies before spoken.

Hence then we conclude, that as, on the one hand, it would be the height of presumption to say, that a person

under the influences of the Holy Spirit, would fail to obtain a knowledge of the truth; so on the other, it would be complete arrogance to pretend that any, or every man can, by his own undirected judgment, arrive at sound conclusions in respect of it. So far as our individual salvation is concerned, the Bible is the property of each person, for the gift of the Holy Spirit is at once the guide to truth, and "the earnest of our inheritance." Without this blessed influence, the soul not only fails to attain to truth now, but to glory hereafter; so that practically each one of us must be allowed to follow out his own convictions, seeing that to his own master he standeth or falleth. This, however, we distinctly maintain; no man whatever has any right to demand the assent of his fellow man to his expositions of Holy Scripture, unless he can furnish the most distinctive evidence that he is truly, and absolutely, guided by the Holy Spirit. Without this pre-requisite all private interpretation of God's Word is valueless.

We thus bring the matter at issue, to the real point on which the whole of the decision rests; how do we know the men absolutely guided by the Holy Spirit? I look upon you, brethren, and trust there are many such here present; and without question, the minister of every congregation, in this and in other lands, would venture to express the same confidence: yet our differences exist. What then is the necessary conclusion to which this fact leads us; but that some, the great majority, if not all, are

mistaken in their estimates, and are deceived in supposing themselves to be actually guided by the Holy Spirit? Methinks the best, and the strongest possible evidence of such being the case, is afforded by those who are so sensible of their own corruptions, as to shrink from claiming the high prerogative. Methinks, that as the flower of most fragrant odour is found close to the ground, shaded by its leaves, so the Christian, best qualified by the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit to "judge all things," would be the most diffident of his powers, and most retiring in his dogmatic assertions. But be this as it may, we cannot doubt that when divers opinions are deduced from the one Word of God, there must be a corresponding diversity in the faculties for making such deductions, and therefore that in the absence of any definite rule, for obtaining certainty as to who is right, the principle of an individual judgment, concerning the doctrines of Holy Scripture, however sound in theory, must fall to the ground when tested by practical applicability ;—fall to the ground, I say, by no means on account of any defect in the Word of God itself, but by reason of the ignorance and prejudices which the interpreters of that word bring to bear upon it.

Nor do I conceive that the position now taken is one whit altered, in the case of those who maintain, that the reading of the pages of Holy Scripture is accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit—that a certain supernatural bestowal of illumination waits on the diligent seeker of the truth. For, even if this be allowed, yet does the

question remain the same; for all read, and many dispute. Therefore, either the Holy Spirit guides to a diversity of opinion inconsistent with truth (which blasphemous idea none dare hold), or all men who read the Sacred writings are not favored with his illuminating influence.

Now you may study the Sacred volume, and arrive at certain conclusions; another does so, and arrives at the opposite. Are you to say that you are right, and he is wrong? Are you to claim the power to reject his claims to Christian brotherhood, and to assert your own perfection? Surely this is, as has been frequently observed, to set up an individual infallibility, which is completely absurd, whether assumed by the Bishop of Rome, or the most obscure member of the Reformed Church.

The Unitarian claims the Scriptures as supporting his tenets. We cannot understand how he can do so with honesty; but we know that he does so. Let us, then, ask the sober question, What right have we to say that we alone are wise, that we know the truth, and that he is in error? What right have we to denounce his doctrines as destructive of our eternal hopes, and as subversive of the very pillars of Christianity?

It is not to be conceived that any dispassionate man would content himself with the answer, "I know that he is wrong;" this would expose him justly, to the ridicule that attends puerilities. How, then, is the promoter of error to be met? Certainly not by individual pretensions; not by personal assumptions of Divine knowledge. Let

a man manifest the extraordinary gifts of an Apostle, and then will we bow to his decision—then will we concede that he may “deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh;” but so long as no such credentials are offered to us, we are certainly not only justified, but compelled, to refuse to become the servants of any one man’s opinion, or to bow ourselves before any individual judgment.

At the same time, let not what we say be strained to an undue pitch. The experience of the Christian Church verifies the important fact, that the rule of faith, which appeals to the Word of God, as interpreted by individuals, has produced wonderful fruits of concord. If the extent of the Reformed Churches be considered, and the very small varieties found among them be collected, it will be found (as we have shewn in a previous discourse) that on no doctrine, really necessary to salvation, is there any diversity as to principle.

We put the case in its strongest point of view, when we adduce the Unitarian as an example; and we must not omit to say, that the Unitarian controversy wears a literary, more than a doctrinal aspect, for he refuses to receive our Scriptures as the true canonical books, and pretends that parts have been introduced, and others corrupted; so that a decision could only be arrived at (and which, indeed, has been frequently done) by learned men verifying manuscripts, and adopting the usual means for the detection of literary forgeries.

But however glad we are to welcome the important fact, that the orthodox Reformed Churches all agree in those matters which are necessary to salvation, and therefore that the charge brought against the system of a private appeal to Scripture, by the opponents, loses very much of its force; still what is the utmost this proves? It is evident that the Reformers were, to a very great extent, guided by the Holy Spirit into the unity of faith; but that they, nevertheless, were not perfectly influenced in all things. They entertained different views; and these differences are tokens of their sin.

Now apply this to the subject of Christian Union. That there are serious causes of difference among Christians none will deny; that they are deemed sufficient barriers to union is equally patent; and, that they are respectively supported by men of learning and piety, it would be uncharitable to dispute. Wherefore we take it to be distinctly proved, that no real union among Christians can possibly be hoped for—that no responsive echo to our prayers can be expected, so long as the fatal barrier to peace and love exists, which the principle, of an individual interpretation of God's Word as the test of truth constitutes.

Did not the place, where we are assembled, discountenance it, I might, on uttering this sentence, expect to be met with severe expostulations—to be asked whether I call upon you, to surrender your private judgment—whether or no the Bible, and the Bible

only, is the foundation of the religion of Protestants. I can well conceive, that the laying bare the defects of a system to which many of us have clung from our childhood, meets with no welcome; and that, in propounding it, I may be deemed to depart from the principles of the Protestant faith.

If there are those present, who hold such an idea, it is well that they be informed that the principle of a private interpretation of God's Word, is *utterly unknown* to our Church; nay, that it is in direct contravention of our Ecclesiastical system. To those who are wont to hear repeated the glorious words of our sixth Article, glorious words they may well be called, that "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that what is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation;" to those, I say, who are wont to hear repeated these glorious words, it may appear that the principle now laid down is contrary to the tenets of our Church; but let me ask, is there one word in this Article which warrants the use of private judgment? That Holy Scripture is the rule of faith, we have no desire to dispute; we embrace it, as our only safe guide; but of this there is no question at present. We now ask, not about the Word of God itself, but about the interpretations, the human interpretations observe, of that Word; and the most acute logician must fail in proving, that the slightest

shadow of sanction is given to the notion of private judgment, by the Article now quoted.

The matter of the principle of our Church is, however, set at rest by a reference to one of her authorized works, well known as Jewel's Apology. This treatise, though of a private person, received the full sanction of the Church at large, and may be therefore referred to as expressing her sentiments. From it I make but one or two quotations out of very many of the same nature. The Bishop thus writes: "We have resorted, as much as we possibly could, to the Church of the Apostles, and of the ancient Catholic Bishops and Fathers; nor have we directed to their rites and institutes our doctrine only, but likewise our administration of the Sacraments and the forms of our public prayers; for we judged that a restoration ought to be sought from that precise quarter, whence the first beginnings of religion might be deduced. This principle, says the very Ancient Father Tertullian, avails against all heresies. Whatsoever is first, is true, whatsoever is later, is adulterate. In like manner Irenæus often appealed to the most ancient Churches, inasmuch as they were nearer to Christ, and inasmuch as it is scarcely credible that they should have erred." In another place the Bishop again expresses himself thus: "From Holy Scripture, which we know to be infallible, we have sought out a sure form of religion, and we have returned to the Primitive Church of the Ancient Fathers and Apostles, that is to say, we have returned to the very rudiments

and beginnings, and as it were to the very fountains themselves." If these quotations are not considered satisfactory as to the principles of our Church, then may we find the same in other parts of the positive rules; thus in the Canons of 1571, it is enjoined, "Preachers shall especially take heed, that in the course of their sermons, they never teach anything to be religiously held, and believed, by the people, save what is agreeable to the doctrine of the Old and New Testament, and save what the Catholic Fathers and ancient Bishops have collected out of that very doctrine." And if it be rejoined that these Canons are not now in force, we turn to those which are, and not to weary you with quotations, it is only necessary to refer to the 30th. 32nd. and 33rd. Canons, which at this time are the law of our Church and binding on all her ministers, where you shall see that the authority of the "Ancient Fathers" is in so many words invoked. So that, however repugnant to our notions it may be, that the private judgment of individual Christians is an unsafe guide to truth, it is at least evident that the ministers of our Church are warranted in disputing it.

In truth, this is no more than all Christians must concede in part. As we have said, who would maintain that an ungodly man is able to discover truth from the Holy volume? Such an assertion is diametrically opposed to the teachings of Sacred Writ. The words of our text, which are perhaps the most emphatic declarations that are to be found respecting the value of

Holy Scripture, distinctly confine its benefits to the *man of God*. They are given not for the unthinking, the worldly-minded—these receive not the things of the Spirit of God—but for the *man of God*, that he may be “perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” St. Peter speaks in like manner that the unlearned and unstable wrest not only the things of St. Paul’s Epistles that are hard to be understood, but also the *other Scriptures* unto their own destruction. St. John’s testimony is to the same point: “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and (pray observe the adjunct of our having fellowship one with another,) and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

Now, since the knowledge of the truth is thus specifically declared, to be the alone possession of those who are spiritually-minded, and since there is a great contention among men as to who are spiritually-minded, (for this our controversies show,) does it not follow that the safest guides, as to the right meaning of Holy Scripture, are to be sought *out of ourselves*; in the writings of men to whom our diversities of opinion were unknown, and who proved their faith and holiness, by a constant adherence to the truth, and, in many instances, by laying down their lives for the truth’s sake. The Ancient Fathers and Bishops of the Church supply our needs. They stand forth as a band of acknowledged

spiritually-minded men, who lived close to the time of the Apostles, and were deeply imbued with their doctrines.

We appeal to any candid mind, whether these persons are not more likely to have expressed the truth than the most learned and pious men of the present day? It really seems superfluous to contend for the point. Writing as many of them did, when the language of the New Testament was a living language, they must have understood it much better than the most profound scholar can now pretend to do. But what is of much greater consequence, they wrote with minds altogether unshackled by our controversies; what they inscribed, bearing upon our questions, affords therefore the strongest of all evidence—indirect testimony,—and can only be rejected by those who fear an adverse verdict.

It may, however, be replied, Do these boasted Fathers all agree? Are there no diversities among them? And if there are, how much is the cause advanced by an appeal from discord to discord. This is the strongest position that is taken in opposition to an appeal to antiquity; and, if we proposed to betake ourselves to any individual of the Fathers, it would be fatal to our aim. We should be told of the flagrant errors of one, of the imaginative conceits of a second, of the platonism of a third, and of grievous errors in the majority. I repeat, that such objections would be fatal to our proposed arbitration, did we make an appeal to any individual Father. But this we do not. We disregard the authority of any one writer who asserts any particular dogma. We adhere to *the chain*

of testimony from the earliest times. We only assert that to be true which has at all times, in every place, and by every person, been acknowledged to be true. If any individual Bishop propound a doctrine peculiar to himself, on the account of its peculiarity it must be rejected; whereas, if all coincide in declaring a doctrine to be true, then must we either accept that doctrine as true, or set up our own personal judgment as superior to the universal voice of the Church. For example, Tertullian fell into the heresy of the Montanists. Do we disregard his writings on that account? Not so. As far as he agreed with the chain of testimony he is an authority; when he departs from that chain, his words are disregarded. Origen again gave birth to a fanciful system, which has afforded a handle for the heresies of a notorious modern writer; Ambrose testified a great leaning to Monasticism; but does the Church justify their faults, because she receives their testimony where it concurs with others of the ancient writers? Certainly not. The concord that exists forms the rule, the peculiarities are rejected. Now you will perceive from this, that the principle we uphold, of a reference to the chain of testimony held by the Church at all times, in all places, and by all men—constitutes the only sure ground of union, because matters of opinion are done away, and matters of fact substituted.

For example: the Unitarian thinks that the opening chapter of St. John's Gospel means one thing, you think it means another. Here individual opinion is balanced against individual opinion, and who shall decide? But

we refer to the Ancient Fathers. We find that Barnabas and Clement, and Hermas, and Ignatius, and Polycarp in the first Century; that Justin Martyr, Theophilus, Melito, Irenæus, in the second Century; Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, and Lactantius, in the third Century, and so forth, (however much they may differ on other matters) all agree that Jesus is the Christ,—Very God of Very God. Now this is no matter of opinion, it is fact. If one writer only made the assertion, we might have some shadow of ground for maintaining our tenets in opposition to his, but when all agree, then if we maintain the controversy, we plainly lay ourselves open to the charge of an over-weening self-conceit, and of wilful error. And it is on this ground which is the only solid ground to which we can, amid the various contentions revert, that we demonstrate the utter fallacy of the Unitarian doctrines, and plainly uphold the truth. Nor is it to be conceived possible that any person who calmly and dispassionately considers the argument, can object either to its reasonableness, or its expediency.

Now we have said, that if the dogma of the lawfulness of private judgment is to be allowed, we see no hope of effecting that union among Christians, which our Redeemer Himself prayed for, and which we dare to pray and hope for; but on the other hand, if the appeal to the unanimous consent of the Fathers be adopted, all questions would then be brought out of the region of opinion, to the solid ground of fact, and must of necessity vanish.

It is one of the greatest evils, that now oppress the Church, that such a chain of testimony has never been distinctly made. Learned men have performed the office for certain subjects, but never has the world seen, what next to the Bible would be the most precious of all books, a compendious statement of the doctrines and practice of the Church in all ages, where individual peculiarities would be rejected, and the chain of testimony alone preserved.

Pardon me if the expression of the hope appear enthusiastic, but I must express my long cherished hope, that the day is not far distant, when our Queen, the beloved of loyal hearts, the pattern of all amiable virtues, the pride of every Briton, will exert her royal power for the accomplishment of this most glorious work. England saw in days gone by, a Protestant King, command and ensure the correct translation of the Holy Scriptures; truth was thus laid bare within the grasp of every one; the passions and prejudices of man have perverted this truth: surely it would be a work alike beneficial to the Christian world, and adorning to her illustrious crown, if the Queen of our affections thus showed herself the Mother of our Israel, with a view to the banishment of our controversies. Last year we beheld a gathering of nations, summoned from the wide world's extent at the invitation of the Consort of our Queen. The humanizing effect of scientific and commercial enterprize, was well represented by the manly character that was so actively

engaged in the attempt to promote peace among men, by the friendly collision of genius. Methinks it would be a fitting sequel to this gorgeous spectacle, to behold the head of our Church and Nation now step forth, to herald a peace and union far more valuable; to hear the sovereign of millions of men, in the gentle feminine tones of love, exhort her subjects to Christian Concord, and command the means for its attainment to be provided. God of his infinite mercy guard and protect her, and incline her heart to this noble undertaking.

The possession of a standard of Christian doctrine, which the chain of testimony we so earnestly desire would afford, would enable us to meet the difficulties which now appear insuperable; nor need the English Churchman fear the result. We only differ from Rome, where she differs from the Ancient Church; at present her adherents are ignorant of this fact, and cling to her as possessing the alone chain of truth. Let them be undeceived, and a vista of hope opens before us, which fancy itself can scarce paint, in too bright colors.

The length to which our subject has led us, precludes further observations. Let me then conclude by recommending once more, the promotion of Christian Union to your energies and prayers.

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee.”

The Subject of this Sermon is treated of, in a very lucid manner by the Rev. G. Stanley Faber, in an appendix to his “Primitive doctrine of Justification.”

THE PRESENT STATE
OF THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH.

SERMON V.

Rom. xiv. 1.

"Him that is weak in the Faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations."

The pious Bishop Hall, in his "Meditations and Vows," expresses the following sentiments: "Then only is the Church most happy, when Truth and Peace kiss each other; and then miserable when either of them baulk the way, or when they meet and kiss not. Truth without Peace is turbulent, and Peace without Truth is severe injustice. Though I love Peace well, I love main Truths better; and though I love all truths well, yet had I rather conceal a small truth, than disturb a common peace." This reflection appears to harmonize exactly with the words of St. Paul, read as our text.—Provided that a man be in the faith, i. e. that he hold main truths, he is to be received as a brother in the faith; and if he be found deficient as to small truths, which are implied in "doubtful disputations," these ought to be left in abeyance, rather than a common peace disturbed.

Assuming the principle here laid down as our guide, we would now proceed to consider the state of the Catholic Church. It has been already said, that the weakness of human nature forbids us to expect perfect unanimity; but we would take a general view of the various national and other Churches, in order to ascertain whether inter-communion may not be regained.

Now as among private persons, attempts to repair a broken harmony are seldom successful, if past conversations are re-called, and stress laid upon sentences that may have been spoken; so may we venture to think, that endeavours to promote Christian Unity, must grasp the present state of mind current in the several Churches, rather than resort to past records. The metaphysical debates propounded, we fear too often as a trial of ingenuity, or for some equally unfruitful purpose, have been spun into such fine threads, and have become so much entangled, that the closest investigation is apt to lose itself in the attempt to clear them of difficulties. The history of error affords such a web of perplexity, and if opened, is so calculated to fan into a flame the dormant embers of partizanship, that it appears most expedient to overlook passed controversies, and to regard only the tenets maintained at the present time.

The present condition of the Eastern Churches, affords a clear illustration of the desirableness of this mode of proceeding. In regard to the Syrian, Armenian, and Coptic Churches, a person unskilled in the ancient

controversies, would, at this time, be altogether at a loss to determine why we are not in communion with them, or why they stand aloof from one another. Did we enter upon the mysterious question of "the double procession," as it is called; that is, whether it is correct to say that the Holy Ghost proceedeth of the Father *and* the Son; or upon some of the very subtle inquiries concerning the titles to be given to the blessed Virgin Mary, we should be liable to awaken well-nigh forgotten controversies, and to close the door against renewed inter-communion: whereas, if we would be content to receive them as brethren in the faith, and to waive all doubtful disputations, there is but little doubt that a spirit of true religion might be renewed among them, and a holy brotherhood cemented.

Nor can I conceive that it would be far otherwise with the Greek Church. Much has been said, of late years especially, concerning the impossibility of effecting a reunion with the Greek Church; but when we know that within the last few years, a missionary from England was invited to preach in the churches at Athens, that he did so to large congregations, who, perhaps, owing to the profound ignorance of the Greek clergy, had never before heard a sermon, and that he was only excluded from the opportunity he possessed, because he attacked certain of their peculiarities, it must be evident that a course of wisdom and prudence, might then have led to the happiest results, and that even now there remains the hope, that the error committed might be remedied. It

would not be becoming to speak of my own experience among the Greek clergy,* but this much may be said; that a lengthy conversation with one of the most eminent of that body, induced the conviction that it is "doubtful disputation" alone, that keeps our Church from communion with the Greek Church. Undoubtedly there is a fearful amount of ignorance, and degrading vice, among many of the clergy of the Greek Church, particularly in the more remote parts of her domain; but it is equally certain, that these are abuses which might be removed, and that these very evils should make us regard her in the light of men of Macedonia, entreating, "Come over and help us."

The great difficulty of stating the present condition of the Greek Church, consists in the obscurity that envelopes her confession of faith. Works of high authority are used, to whose doctrines we could not assent; but these are not her authentic standards. So far as can be ascertained, whatever is really maintained by the Church herself, is altogether orthodox: when, then, we add that she lays no claim to infallibility; that the Sacred Scriptures are read publicly, and listened to by the hearers with an attention which we could wish, found its parallel among us; that the Holy Communion is delivered in both kinds; that her clergy are not required to adopt celibacy, this discipline being imposed alone on the inmates of monasteries and on bishops; and that the one grievous error she

* See Note on the Oriental Churches at the end of this Sermon.

maintains, is a superstitious reverence for the blessed Virgin Mary; we may hope that candid enquiry would show, that "doubtful disputations" constitute the only obstacles to our possessing communion with her.

Would to God that we could make the same assertions concerning Rome! We fear however, that the disputations which separate us from her, are matters of principle and not merely of doubt. As we have said, the infallibility she affects, demands of us submission, if we seek reconciliation. The knowledge that the creed of Pope Pius must be received by all who desire her communion, closes the door of hope; for as Bishop Hall declares "though I love peace well, I love main Truths better." So long then as the name of the Virgin Mary is invoked for succour; as the performance of penance is esteemed an expiation for sin; as the consecrated wafer is held up to public adoration; as the "intention" of the priest is considered necessary to the efficacy of the Sacraments; so long as these and other kindred dogmas are regarded as truth, the positive reception of which is demanded as necessary to salvation, so long must we fear that our controversy with Rome is incurable. If we be mistaken, if Rome do not hold these views, if they be only fastened upon her by her adversaries, then on being assured of our error, we would rejoice to confess and repent of our faults, and be glad to embrace her children as brethren in the faith. But if we are not mistaken, if she does teach and endeavour to propagate these corruptions of

truth, then must we for conscience sake, for truth's sake, for the sake of our Lord and Saviour, refuse all approach to her errors, and endure the penalty of separation as one of the trials which fidelity to our Master, amid a crooked and perverse generation, demands of us.

We have thus briefly spoken of the more distant Churches. By the instrumentality of prudent and careful men, we might hope for the restoration of communion with the Eastern Churches; and Rome herself might be induced to make such internal reforms, as would enable us to entertain the question of reconciliation with her, did she behold other Churches banded together, and presenting a front of union to oppose her arrogant pretensions.

There is one body of Christians to whom we must here refer, but with whom we know not how to act on account of their uncertain position; I refer to the Jansenist Church. She claims to be in communion with Rome, although repeatedly excommunicated by successive Pontiffs; she thus appears to be altogether isolated; rejected by Rome, she on her part, rejects other Christians, and the common ground of peace appears therefore as yet to be discovered.

We approach, then, the more important and more tangible question of Christian Unity, as regards the Reformed Churches. In a previous discourse, we have seen that so far as regards doctrine, the discrepancies found among this body, exist much more in degree than in principle. We have also seen that the great obstacle to the

consummation of our hopes, is in the matter of discipline. It is chiefly then as respects this latter question, that we would speak of the Reformed Churches; and we may perhaps most commodiously treat of them by observing the three leading sections, to one or other of which, all the smaller bodies are more or less closely allied; these are the Lutheran, the Calvinistic or Presbyterian, and the Anglican Churches. The two former maintain a discipline by no means uniform, and present the varieties with which we are acquainted.

The Lutheran system, recognizes the ruler of the state as the supreme authority, in all causes, ecclesiastical as well as civil. The government of the Churches, however, differs in various lands; thus, in Sweden and Norway the Lutheran Church is Episcopal; in Denmark, under the title of Superintendent, all Episcopal authority is exercised; while in Germany, the superior power is vested in a Consistory, over which there is a president, with a distinction of rank and privileges, and a subordinate order of Clergy.

Nor is the discipline of the Calvinistic Churches more uniform. The first Swiss Reformer Zwingli, concurred with Luther in yielding supreme power, as to ecclesiastical regulations, to the civil magistrate, and further, in recognising difference of rank among the Clergy. Calvin however maintained, that the Church is independent of the temporal ruler; that it is competent to adjust its own government, in synods and consistories, looking only for

protection to the civil power, and further, he asserted perfect equality among the presbyters or ministers. Shades of difference on these points are to be perceived, with greater or less distinctness among the Presbyterian body, whose customs in Holland, France, Scotland, or Switzerland, though generally alike, are in some matters diverse. Into these differences we need not enter, nor can we speak of the interesting and truly christian efforts of the Kings of Prussia, to promote religious unity among their subjects; we would only refer to these endeavours as furnishing information, both encouraging and warning, to the promoters of Christian unity.

The most perceptible division in the camp of Calvin, and which most intimately affects us, is that arising from the adoption of Independent, or Congregationalist principles. This body, important alike for its numbers and its influence, is precluded from promulgating any common confession of faith, inasmuch as its members deprecate all except a spiritualized Christian Unity. Each individual congregation makes up a Church, which is exempt from all external jurisdiction, elects its own minister, dismisses him by the vote of the majority of members, who are themselves admitted or expelled by the same mode.

Such are the general outlines of the systems pursued by the Reformed Churches, not in communion with us. Of the Moravian Church which is Episcopal, and in most respects similar to our own, we need only say, that were the voice of our Church now audible, it can scarce be

doubted but that that zealous, and highly to be respected body of missionaries, would at once receive the welcome of brethren. Nor is it needful to make any remarks on the large and influential Wesleyan body, since they only cease to be in communion with us, when they depart from the system devised by their illustrious founder,—an earnest Christian; whom in the present day the Anglican Church would welcome to her bosom, instead of offering obstacles to his zeal.

The great question of interest lies in the possibility of reconciling the three bodies, the Lutheran, the Calvinistic, and our own Church, so far as that they might enjoy inter-communion.

Now in respect of the Lutheran Church, it may be regarded as an open question, whether we are not in communion with that portion of her, which possesses Episcopal orders. It is well known that many most efficient missionaries, employed by our two societies for the spread of the gospel, have been Lutherans; and it may be doubted whether our laws would sanction, the rejection of a Lutheran Clergyman from an English benefice, if he were Episcopally ordained. As therefore the Lutheran system admits Episcopacy, it does not seem too much to ask, that for the sake of Christian Unity, that discipline should be universally adopted by that Church;—This remark narrows the limits of our discussion.

We cannot be insensible, that we have now brought the most distinctly marked opponents face to face, and

that the real difficulty of our whole enquiry is laid bare. The chief obstacle to Christian Unity is plainly seen to be, the differing opinions concerning Episcopacy. There are those of us, who regard the government of the Church by Bishops as of Divine institution, and as imperatively binding on the conscience. To yield this point, we deem impossible; if therefore Christian Unity is to be effected, the Calvinistic Churches must of necessity make a concession; nor do we ask much of them when requiring this. They all insist on the reception of orders as a necessary qualification for the exercise of the ministerial office; is it too much that they should consent that these orders be conferred by Bishops instead of Presbyters? For us to forsake Episcopacy would be to relinquish a principle, for them to adopt Episcopacy would be no such dereliction. This is a ground of reconciliation which we trust might be adopted, and which moreover is sanctioned by our text. When a tenet is regarded as indispensable, it can scarcely be esteemed a matter of doubtful disputation; when however the principle is allowed, but the details of practice differ, then do such differences appear but of light moment.

Could we but succeed in reconciling this one difficulty, others might speedily be brought to a satisfactory solution. The Anglican Church admits the appointment of ministers by the congregation, in cases where the patronage is vested in the parish, so that there is no real obstacle in that particular. We are at present most seriously inconvenienced,

by the want of discipline in our Church. The collisions of the civil and the canon law are so numerous, that no thinking Churchman can be ignorant of the loss experienced, and of the great spiritual advantage we might hope to reap, from a restoration of the functions of the Church in respect to discipline; on this point therefore, we should, so far from opposing, go joyfully hand in hand with those who desire to retain the power of expelling "notorious evil livers." Further, in the particular of removing obnoxious ministers, it can scarcely be questioned, but that the most rigid congregationalist would agree, that such a power ought to be vested in persons, not interested in the peculiar matters of controversy; that a judge of strife, ought not to be a partaker in the strife, and that our desires would therefore meet their requirements in this respect also.

We cannot look upon the Presbyterians of Scotland, without some anxiety as regards the reconciliation of our controversies. It is true that the flood of two hundred years, ought to have washed out the remembrance of unkindness and heart-burnings. It is true that the intermixture of the two nations, has now happily been so complete, that much prejudice must be removed. It is further true, that the collegiate institutions of Scotland develope a liberality of feeling towards the members of our Church, which commands our admiration. But the knowledge that our Northern brethren are extremely zealous for the forms of faith, so heroically defended by

their forefathers, can but arouse an anxiety lest any unkind word be spoken, or any injudicious act performed, which might again open the wounds of peace.

Still these are but human fears, and Faith should triumph over fear. We might alarm ourselves with the expressions of hostility which we mourn to hear from time to time uttered by members of the Congregationalist body at home. We dare to hope however, that the appeal of Love would not be unheeded by those zealous spirits.

We cannot, brethren, recur to the events of the past year, when a foreign Potentate assumed authority subversive of that of our much loved Queen, and entered upon our land with the air of a conqueror, to whom belongs the power to parcel out a territory, without feeling that we possess ground for this hope. It was a heart-cheering sight to see our countrymen rise as one man, to repel the unwarrantable aggression; to hear the free voice of a free people, declare in tones not to be mistaken, that by the grace of God they would submit to no foreign usurpation. At such a time, had the often spoken words of opposition to our Church been of a rancorous spirit, the congregationalists might have kept aloof from the side of truth, even if they had not joined the ranks of the invader, and a most fearful calamity been thereby inflicted on us. But did they act thus? Would they betray truth for the sake of party? No! the Congregationalist body were unanimous in denouncing an usurpation which was an injury to us alone. Methinks we may read in this single

act, an echo to the words of the Mother in Israel ; " My heart is towards the governors of Israel." Methinks we ought not to be outdone in generosity of soul ; let our reply to such conduct consist in an opening of brotherly arms, and a willingness to remember no more the various heart-burnings and strifes that have rent us in twain.

There is yet a further consideration, of some importance to our subject. If we may judge from external manifestations, very much of the extreme precision of the Calvinistic system has lost its force. Experience seems to have proved to its adherents, that to gather up the tares endangers the wheat, and that no Church can exist without making some allowance for the frailty of humanity. The long cherished antipathy to every species of ecclesiastical garment is now removed. Instruments of music are heard, where once they would have been deemed profanation. Architectural ornaments now grace the houses of prayer, which of old time abhorred all material decorations. We rejoice that these changes are made, that Christian men perceive that they need not go out of the world, in order to escape being of the world. But above all, that these, trifles as they are, betoken the existence of a spirit most favourable to the repairing of the breaches, which have so long and so fearfully harrassed the Church of God.

Now, with this view of our present state, we ask, whether there is not sufficient ground for an effort to be made to promote Christian Unity. We cannot dare to

hope for unanimity; but may not inter-communion be attained.

The example of the Roman Church may serve as a guide, when, without injury to the truth, her sagacious counsels may be followed. She has received into her communion different bodies of men, who were at issue with her on some minor points. How was this effected? Not by yielding her own tenets; but by granting a certain amount of liberty to them, in respect of their peculiarities. They, on their part, accept her teaching on important matters, while continuing to retain the observances dear to them. What then should hinder our own Church, from dealing in a similar manner with those who are now separate from us? Do they object to our Baptismal service? Allow them to use their own. Let them consign their dead to the common church-yard, using a ritual agreeable to their views. Let their children be taught the catechism of the Assembly of Divines, or of the deservedly esteemed Dr. Watts. Such a liberty as this conceded to them, is no invasion of our own privileges. It is no innovation without the sanction of authority. We are, as has been already said, in close communion with our sister Churches of Scotland and America. They do not use our formularies without any alterations. Where, then, we ask, is the advantage, not to say the justice, of denying to some what is granted to others?

Brethren, these remarks affect us yet more closely,

they reach our own brethren of the Anglican Church. Let us look to ourselves. When, within the last few weeks, no less than four thousand clergymen of the united Church of England and Ireland, have subscribed an address to our ecclesiastical rulers, praying them to take into consideration the present difficulties experienced by the clergy, in the matter of the burial of the dead; when numerous signed addresses were presented to our Primate, rejoicing in the decision that the doctrine of regeneration, in and by baptism, is not declared to be the definite teaching of our Church; we need not express an opinion on these matters; but we ask, is it not patent, that the liberty we seek for those who are separate from us, would come to be a most welcome boon to many of our own brethren? Should we not, in this manner, achieve a mode of healing those controversies which are even now shaking the very foundations of our Church? Brethren, we live in days when selfish exclusiveness is felt to be a personal, as well as a relative detriment. We cannot be at all acquainted with the tone of mind prevalent among Churchmen themselves, without knowing that a determinate adherence to every particular of our system, whether it be expedient or not, is fraught with the most awful consequences.

But is a resistance to every alteration in our exterior fabric an adherence to our own system? Let the preface to our book of Common Prayer reply. "It hath been the wisdom of the Church of England, ever since the first

compiling of her public Liturgy, to keep the mean between the two extremes, of too much stiffness in refusing, and of too much easiness in admitting, any variation from it; for as, on the one side, common experience sheweth, that where a change hath been made of things, absolutely established, no evident necessity so requiring, sundry inconveniences have thereupon ensued, and those many times more and greater than the evils that were intended to be remedied by such change; so on the other side, particular forms of divine worship, and the rites and ceremonies appointed to be used therein, being things, in their own nature, indifferent and alterable, and so acknowledged, it is but reasonable that upon weighty and important considerations, according to the various exigency of times and occasions, such changes and alterations should be made therein, as to those that are in place of authority should, from time to time, seem either necessary or expedient." This extract must be allowed to justify the views now advocated, and to condemn all, who, without consideration, would resist any alterations.

One further remark will conclude our present reflections. In our last discourse we maintained that an appeal to the unanimous voice of the Church, in all ages, affords a sure ground of truth. Now, it is more than probable, that the arguments then used may fail to convince many zealous advocates for private judgment; but surely all must concede, that in matters of discipline, the rule is both applicable and desirable. Since the

government of our Churches is for this world only, while "charity never faileth," is not a reference to any arbitration preferable to a continuance in the breach of charity? Methinks that the value of peace and Christian Union is so great, that let but truth be preserved, and we ought to submit to any conditions for their sakes. To the judge of controversy we propose, especially in matters of discipline, we know not who can object. Neither the Lutheran nor the Calvinistic schools could refuse the principle without condemning their founders; for though the appeal to antiquity, made by them, was by no means so clear as that adopted by the English Church, yet did they both gladly avail themselves of the assistance which the writings of the Fathers, particularly S. Augustine, afforded. If then this simple plan could be but received, our most enthusiastic hopes as to Christian Union, would scarce be disappointed. A standard of authority would be erected, and under its banners Truth and Peace might meet; Righteousness and Peace might kiss each other, and then "Truth should spring out of the Earth and Righteousness look down from Heaven." My soul, how lovely is the vision of peace.

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee."

NOTE ON THE ORIENTAL CHURCHES.

The remarks made concerning the Syrian, Armenian, and Coptic Churches, are based on the authority of a clergyman long resident in Palestine, and most intimately acquainted with the Churches in question. It may be supposed that the present Bishop of the Anglican Church at Jerusalem, would be most eminently qualified, to examine the possibility of effecting an inter-communion with those bodies; the more especially as he was, if I mistake not, solicited to accept a Bishopric in the Coptic Church, when labouring as a Missionary in Abyssinia.

My statement concerning the gentleman who preached at Athens, and whose name was given to me, (but which for obvious reasons is concealed), is made on the authority of a gentleman resident in Athens in 1844, and practising as a civil advocate. He has published a small pamphlet on the Greek Church, which coming from one qualified by literary attainments, and long residence in Greece, can scarcely be read without respect. Mr. Masson I believe is now a minister of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Through his introduction, I was favoured with a long conversation with one of the most eminent of the Greek clergy. Being told that I was an Oxford man, he began at once to inquire into the meaning of the Oxford movement, and to my surprise, was well acquainted with the leading names engaged in that controversy.

His loudly expressed wonder at the possibility of Englishmen being willing again to subject themselves to Roman domination, encouraged me to ask some questions concerning the Greek Church.

I ventured to state that the question as to what were the authentic standards, was difficult to be determined, but that I was told that they were of the most orthodox character. This led to the inquiry what is orthodox. He then spoke of the complete corruption of the human will, its powerlessness to return to righteousness, the Deity and Manhood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the perfect sacrifice of Christ as man's only hope, and the necessity for the influences of the Holy Spirit. On my speaking of the power of the Holy Spirit on the soul, the aged saint (for such I must esteem him), with much emotion said, "What am I? What art thou, my son, that we should hope to save ourselves, or to perform that Divine act of attaining to holiness, which is the alone work of the Holy Spirit?" I ventured to ask concerning the worship of the Virgin Mary; his answer was very simple, but forcible;—"When you came into my room, how did you address my daughters?" I replied, using the ordinary language of compliment,—“these,” he rejoined, “are the words in which I address the blessed Mother of Jesus, and do you think if I worshipped her, I could allow the same language to be used to my children, in my presence, without a rebuke?” I felt satisfied, that the differences between the Greek Church and ourselves, are matters of doubtful disputation.

THE ENEMIES OF PEACE.

SERMON VI.

Isaiah xxxii. 17.

“ And the work of righteousness shall be peace.”

THE prophet thus speaks to the Church of the Old Testament. St. James addresses the Christian Church in very similar language—“ The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, of them that make peace”—*James* iii. 18. The Holy Spirit thus (as in every other instance) evidences the unity of His truth, and inculcates the important lesson, that the absence of peace among Christians denotes the imperfection of righteousness. There may be a fancied peace, where righteousness is wanting; for the wicked say, “ peace, peace, when there is no peace.” But there cannot be true righteousness without its certain fruit—peace. “ The work of righteousness shall be peace.”

Now this truth is so universally received, that no man willingly allows himself to be an enemy to peace. Enquire of the most turbulent of men, why he disregards the law of love, and you shall obtain the reply, that he contends only with error; that he loves peace; and would gladly extend the hand of friendship to the most heretical, on the renunciation of his heresy. In other words, he would rejoice to welcome as a friend the man who is willing to embrace his opinions. Would we submit to Rome, surrender the truths we hold, or rather adopt her additions to the truth, and bow to the authority of the foreign bishop, we might at once be enrolled among her faithful children. Would we discard allegiance to our own Church, and relinquish our principles, we might be hailed as brethren by those who separate from us on these grounds. Nor should we ourselves fail to rejoice over any that might see it their duty to leave the ranks of opposition, and to marshal themselves under the banners of our holy Mother.

This fact may serve to convince us, that it is needless to argue the abstract question—whether discord is, or is not, sinful. Nor can we hope that the controversies which vex the Church will be removed by denunciations of the guilt incurred by them. We would rather seek for our subject a precise and practical application, so that we may grasp the spirit of disunion, and say to the enemy of peace (albeit with much humility, on account of our personal sin, yet boldly) “Thou art the man.”

In a previous discourse we endeavoured to trace the requirements made by our Church of those who seek her communion. We saw that to her sons is granted the greatest amount of liberty, consistent with the retention of truth. Subsequent investigations have enabled us to conclude, that the principles she maintains are to a greater or less degree upheld by the various Reformed Churches, with whom we are unhappily not in communion. The question now rises, whether we maintain our Church to be so perfect as that in no respect she is partaker of the sin of enmity to peace. Is our Church, in any respect, open to the charge of such an exclusiveness, as precludes inter-communion with others who are unwilling to concede her every demand?

Now, if by inter-communion be meant the power of mutual exchange of official duties, and of union in the celebration of holy rites, we must confess that the present laws of our Church do involve an incapacity on her part to admit of it. By the legislative enactments, made in an age of excitement but still in force in the main particulars, no minister can be allowed to perform official functions without subscribing the Articles of the Church, and declaring his conformity to the Liturgy. By the rubric affixed to the Order of Confirmation, it is enjoined that "none shall be admitted to the Holy Communion until such time as he be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed." In these two respects we acknowledge that our Church does oppose barriers to that

brotherly unity we advocate. In regard to the reception of confirmation previous to admission to the Holy Communion, it can scarcely be called an obstacle to unity, inasmuch as every body of Christians demands a confession of faith from those who seek participation in their sacred rites. The mode in which this confession is made, therefore, rightly comes under the head of that liberty in the use of the offices already sought. We know, to our sorrow, that our discipline is sadly in abeyance in many essentials; and we cannot regard the defender of such laxity, much less its promoter, as a faithful son of our Church; but as the main object of the rubric in question, is doubtless to ensure a solemn regard to the Holy Sacrament in those who partake of it, the end might be attained without the use of the specific means now adopted. If it were permitted to those who were in communion, but not one with us, to baptize their children or adults after their own form, we might surely, while acknowledging such baptism, also receive as communicants those who had made a profession of faith according to some other besides our own ritual.

Persistence in the principles of the Act of Uniformity, however, is of a different complexion, and is by no means free from difficulty. To argue for its entire abrogation would be to advocate the continuance of our Liturgy, with the greatest uncertainty as to the doctrines enunciated from the pulpit. To maintain its existence whole and entire, is to incur the charge of exclusiveness, inasmuch

as it utterly precludes inter-communion with those who do not obey its injunctions. While, then, we acknowledge that the laws of our Church are stringent as forbidding a mutual exchange of official duties with any who do not accept our whole system, we must feel that a proper regard to truth could only allow such a modification of them as would admit those for whose soundness in the faith some sufficient guarantee was given.

Some little consolation as to the enmity to peace charged upon our Church, in this particular, may be drawn from the fact that the Act of Uniformity is the law of the Church only, as it is the law of the land. The constitutional liberty we possess allows us, therefore, the power to seek some alteration in respect of it, without affecting our filial duty. If, then, this feature of our system could be but calmly considered by pious and dispassionate men, we might hope that some alterations might be suggested, as would allow a brotherly intercourse with Christians sound in the faith, without infringing the individual assurance we now possess. Such a result, if attained, would be a great pledge of our own desires for unity, and wipe away any shadow of reproach from our Church as an enemy to peace.

We next demand whether other of the Reformed Churches maintain principles, which render them in any respect liable to the imputation of being enemies to peace.

Not to retrace ground already trodden, we remark only that one feature of the Congregationalist principles which

regards inter-communion. It has been already stated that each separate society amongst them exercises the power of admitting, suspending, and expelling its members. It must now be added that, as a general rule, the Holy Sacrament is administered only to these; that strangers are ordinarily excluded; at least, that an introduction from his own minister is a requisite for the admission of any person to participation in the Lord's Supper. It is true that the question of open or close communion is a matter of great diversity among the members of the Congregationalist body. The Baptists, with very rare exceptions, maintaining a close reserve; the Independents being more ready to admit strangers. It is, however, clear that conformity to such a rule constitutes a cloak of exclusiveness, and that so long as it is maintained, willing as we are that they should kneel around the table of the Lord with us, we could not be received as participants of Holy Communion with them.

We are far from backward to confess that in our own Church, discipline is in a fearful abeyance. The penalties imposed by the legislature render void many of our Ecclesiastical Canons, and constitute a burden hard to be borne by many of the parochial clergy. We should be rejoiced to see the complications of the civil and canon law so far removed, as to release the ministers of our Church from the dilemmas into which they are from time to time placed. On this ground we may frame some excuse for the strictness which the Congregationalist body

may esteem necessary to their self-preservation ; and we would even accept that strictness as a token of the benefits that would accrue to us, as well as to them, from a re-establishment of inter-communion. Still, we must think that to no man, who has made a confession of faith, and who does not nullify such confession by a notoriously evil life, should access to the means of grace be refused.

It is surely inconsistent with the precepts of our Saviour for me to refuse to join my brother in an act of obedience to a Divine institution, because I may not be fully convinced in my own mind that he is so altogether devoted a person as I could wish. Nay, rather let me feel my own sins to be so grievous, that I am unworthy to take the crumbs which fall from my master's table. The desire to surround oneself with a halo of piety is doubtless good ; but the resolution that none shall be admitted within the favored circle, save those whom we judge to be living as Christians, is not, cannot be, in accordance with the will of our all-merciful Redeemer. The zeal and excited feelings of byegone days might sanction such a spirit ; but we hope that Christians in the present day would be found to discard such an exclusiveness, and therein to shew themselves the friends, rather than the enemies, of peace.

There are other characteristics of the present day which call for observation, but of which we would speak most tenderly, inasmuch as they serve rather for rallying points to the enemies of peace, than incur the charge itself.

Our Religious Societies are of this class. Schemes formed for the glory of our Lord, conducted by men of prayer, and directed to the best interests of mankind, are perverted so as to become standards under which opposing forces may be marshalled. Why have we so many Missionary Societies? Why is the kingdom of Jesus to be hindered, by the heathen being addressed by so many rival ministers, solicited by what must seem to them so many advocates of different religions? We know that we are, as regards the truth, One; but it is next to impossible that the uninstructed can make such discriminations. Moreover, consider the sacrilege that party spirit effects—how many separate establishments are maintained—how much cost is expended in the workings of the Societies. Christians subscribe funds, for the enlargement of the kingdom of Christ, not for the support of the persons who manage the machinery put in operation for this end. Let any man sum up the home expenses of Missionary Societies, and then ask whether the expenditure rendered necessary for the mere working of them, would not supply multitudes of labourers to the harvest; whether it does not constitute a sacrilegious spoliation perpetrated by party. Consider, also, the fearful waste in printing and disseminating information, entailed by such rivalry, and you have a picture which every earnest-minded Christian would do well to ponder. Now we cannot be ignorant that these excellent institutions, (and the same may be said of many others,) do become instrumental in preserving

discord among Christians, because they are based on isolated, and not on Catholic, principles; so that, while in themselves they deserve every praise, incidentally they come to be enemies of peace.

Were we to proceed to enumerate the sinful propensities of man, as enemies to peace, we might produce a long catalogue, only to be effaced by the mighty operation of the Holy Spirit. Pride, self-seeking, the love of the world, envy, hatred, malice, and uncharitableness, would meet rebuke. On these general topics we cannot enter, they are made the subjects of our ordinary discourses; one only remark may be made;—it seems as if the normal state of Christian ministers at the present time, was separation from each other. We do not know one another, we are never brought in contact, and therefore form ideas probably very dissonant to truth. Such a separation is a powerful enemy to peace; could a means be devised by which Christian ministers could be brought into a more close connexion, it cannot be doubted but that the slight diversities, which now appear to be mountains, would gradually diminish, and shortly disappear. Friendly intercourse is perhaps our most powerful instrument for the promotion of Christian Union, and if we could but attain to this one step, we might entertain the most lively hopes that the reign of discord would be speedily brought to a close, and the bright beams of life-imparting peace be caused to arise on the Church. Then would our solemn hymns of rejoicing be heard!

Then would the adversary be put to confusion! Then would the fruits of righteousness be sown in peace of them that make peace; while the triumphant Church should sing the words of the Psalmist "Behold how good and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity!" May God of His infinite mercy accomplish so desirable an event. Who would not rejoice? Who would not afford full scope to the long pent-up yearnings of his soul for brotherly love? Who would not thank God, that he had lived to see so glorious a consummation, and be prepared to say "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace?"

Alas! that amid such joyous anticipations a cloud should intervene; that a chill of dread should fall like a blank upon our most sanguine expectations, and well nigh implant a despair, that all our meditations are vain. The words of our text should be encouraging, how come they to inspire despondency? It is from the conviction that as "the work of righteousness shall be peace," so the absence of a just, a righteous spirit among men, is the enemy of peace; and moreover that this spirit is so fearfully predominant. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" Who can look at the state of the Church, of our own Church, at this time, without feeling the close applicability of the Apostle's denunciation?

There is nothing so good, brethren, but that the

passions of man will pervert it. There is no instrumentality designed for the furtherance of the Gospel of Christ, which is not warped to its hindrance, by the pride and over-weening conceit of man. Would that we could close our reflections on Christian Union, without the utterance of one word calculated to provoke opposition! Would that we could banish, or palliate the knowledge that thrusts itself upon us, that there are among us, yes, in our own Church, among our own brethren in Christ, those so unmindful of their vows, and their holy engagements, as to be indifferent to the peace of God's Church; as to disregard the prayer of our Saviour, and to stir up the minds of their hearers by incessant tirades against their own brethren. May God forgive me the thought, if it be a breach of charity; but may we not ask, is there not much self-seeking, and regard to men, and to men's applause, in such a course of conduct? Oh! it is enough to draw tears from the eye of love, to see announcements made in the most public manner; that a clergyman of our Church, a minister of the Body of Christ, is to deliver a public address on the errors of his brethren. Say, is this needful? Is it kind? Does it breathe forth the Spirit of Christ? If indeed a pastor feels that his flock needs to be guarded against a particular danger, God speed his efforts to preserve them from it. Cannot this, however, be done without the sounding of the trumpet, the summoning of parade, and the enkindling of acrimonious feeling? Who

shall tell the grievous injury that has been effected by such unruly conduct? Who can tell how a shaft thus shot at random, has stricken some timid heart, and made it desire to escape the scene of turmoil, and to grasp the fancied peace of the convent or the monastery? Brethren, when false doctrine is abroad, we who are ministers of Christ must resist such; but is the soldier to fly from the ranks because the enemy appears? Has he not his set duties, and those completely sufficient to occupy his time, and engage his energies, without usurping the place of the commanding officer? Would God, that our brethren would universally adopt the resolution, to resist to extremities all heresy and error, *within their appointed spheres*; but to feel that they lay themselves open to the charge of seeking this world's favor, of coveting the approval of the unthinking, when they presume to transgress the boundary within which they are called to minister. How fearfully does the leaven of unkindness, thus spread, and multiply itself. Epithets of reproach are invented, the harshest language encouraged, and an energy in promoting discord displayed, as if the Gospel of Christ enjoined hatred instead of love, injury in place of beneficence. Is it not a grievous reproach to us, that children scarcely removed from the care of the instructor, should be heard to express themselves in strong language, against this or that person, this or that tone of thought, uttering, and encouraged to utter, words which the prudent and judicious scarce dare permit to

themselves? Is it not a fearful token of sin, that the most solemn subjects, the deep things of our holy faith, should be made the matter of ridicule, and the supporters of certain opinions, butts for the arrows of the scoffer? Brethren, "these things ought not so to be." These are the enemies of peace, these the too patent proofs of the want of righteousness. I venture to speak thus freely as your minister, known to you for some time. You will not seek to avoid the truths I propound, by a charge of my favoring any extreme sentiments. You know that I entertain no sympathy with departure from the tenets of our Church; therefore is there no room for escape, from these solemn and fearful realities, under the plea of their being spoken by a partizan. They are spoken, (and would they could reach the ears of all who need to hear them!) to declare in the plainest terms, that the enemy to peace is the enemy to righteousness; that he who barter peace for popular applause, is trafficking with his own soul; and that they who presume to deride tenets and persons, of whom they are ignorant, are open to the most severe censures, as being wise only in their own conceits.

The adversary of Christian love, however, is found in another, and possibly a yet more dangerous place, occupying a position where himself unknown, he can by means of the periodical press, exert an influence beyond calculation. We have seen how the ministry of Christ, that most effective instrument for the dissemination of

the truths of our holy religion may be perverted. We thank God that this occurs in but comparatively few instances. The evil is indeed dreadful, but how much more pernicious, and how much more horribly sinful, is the case to which we now refer! The writer for the public press, who, for the sake of money, stirs up the embers of discord, and constantly disregards the law of love, must be esteemed one of the most formidable enemies of peace. Brethren, the liberty of the press is one of the great privileges of Britons, long may it be continued to us and our children; but there are bounds, beyond which this liberty becomes a curse instead of a blessing. If there be wanting an illustration of this, we need only point to what are called "Religious Newspapers." Nor do I scruple to express as the conclusion of long and anxious thought, that if there be one enemy to the truth of Christ, more successful in working the works of darkness than another, it is the venal rancour of mis-called religious newspapers. Written by party men, for party purposes, their circulation depends on the amount of discord they can excite; and thus the body of Christ is rent asunder, and sold again and again, for money fit only to purchase an Aceldama. These remarks may appear severe, but they are needful; needful to preserve you from the poison administered by one clothed in the garb of an angel of light, to which you may be exposed. Now the least experienced must see, that by this weight of pecuniary interest and influence,

exerted by men to whom the obscurity of unacknowledged writing affords a shield against public shame, the exertions of those who love peace, and strive for union, must be seriously impeded. We can, therefore, but regard such productions as enemies to peace, inasmuch as their works are the opposite to righteousness.

With this remark we may bring our reflections to a close. Yet I would hope not to such a conclusion as that they be dismissed from our memories. There is a voice making itself heard through the Christian world, demanding union. Amid the surges of discord, the tempests of controversy, and the thunders of acrimony, this still small voice is making itself heard. Look abroad, you shall see the hand of friendship outstretched, feeling for a warm response. You shall see men of all shades of thought dreading isolation—coveting concord with some, if not with all. There is a mysterious influence developing itself in all ways. One looks to the extension of commerce—another to a national adjudication—a third would seek reconciliation with Rome—a fourth would affect a species of spiritualized union with the Reformed Churches. What means this tone of soul thus universally manifesting itself? Is it a species of spiritual instinct, that urges minds to seek companionship, as you see the wild birds flock more thickly, when the more furious blast of the hurricane is about to blow? Is this suddenly awakened sentiment prophetic? Do men begin to dread, if they be not drawn together, they shall be driven together? We know not. We

cannot account for it; but there is a wonderful phenomenon of mind now visible. There is a disposition of soul developed, which may be described as a feeling after, if haply they may find, union and peace.

Is this, I ask once more, an instinctive dread of danger? There are clouds on the horizon of the Church sufficient to awaken the most fearful forebodings. Rome is to be feared; but the terrors she inspires are trifles compared to the appalling mists of rationalism which are over-flooding our land, after having wasted the Continent of Europe. Brethren, the words that furnished a text for our opening discourse must be remembered. Our Lord prayed that we, His disciples, might be One, "As Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou has sent Me." The extension of the kingdom of Christ is here distinctly associated with union among Christians. And now what do we see? Unity next to annihilated, and Infidelity stalking abroad. Here do we unmistakeably discern the hand ready to write on the wall. Is this, then, the time for supineness? Is it the time for standing on the minutiae of rights—the niceties of opinions? The reflecting mind says no—the history of mankind says no—the Christian soul says no.

Methinks the Christian may behold multitudes of adversaries assaulting the Church of Christ. He may trace by their effects the harsh Moloch, the seductive Belial, the grovelling Mammon. Would he, however, discover

the most successful opponent of all earnest mindedness, let him not look for an open foe, let him rather strip the garment of light from the shoulder of him, who under pretence of an over zeal for truth, is the enemy to peace. The power of truth our Eternal Lord connects with the unity of His disciples, he then, who, except under the pressure of urgent necessity, does ought to infuse or propagate discord in the Church, is at once the enemy of truth and the enemy of peace; whereas, he who would escape the evils which threaten us, and achieve the good we desire, must lay to heart the great danger we are in by our unhappy divisions, and strive, by the help of God, to promote Christian Union.

Obey, then, the Divine command, and look for the Divine promise. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love Thee."

The Author of these Sermons respectfully invites communications from any persons, lay or clerical, who may be willing to further the objects he now advocates. He would fain follow up his exhortations with some effort to promote Christian Union.

Burnt Ash, Lee, Kent,
Easter, 1852.



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